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JULY

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Adventure

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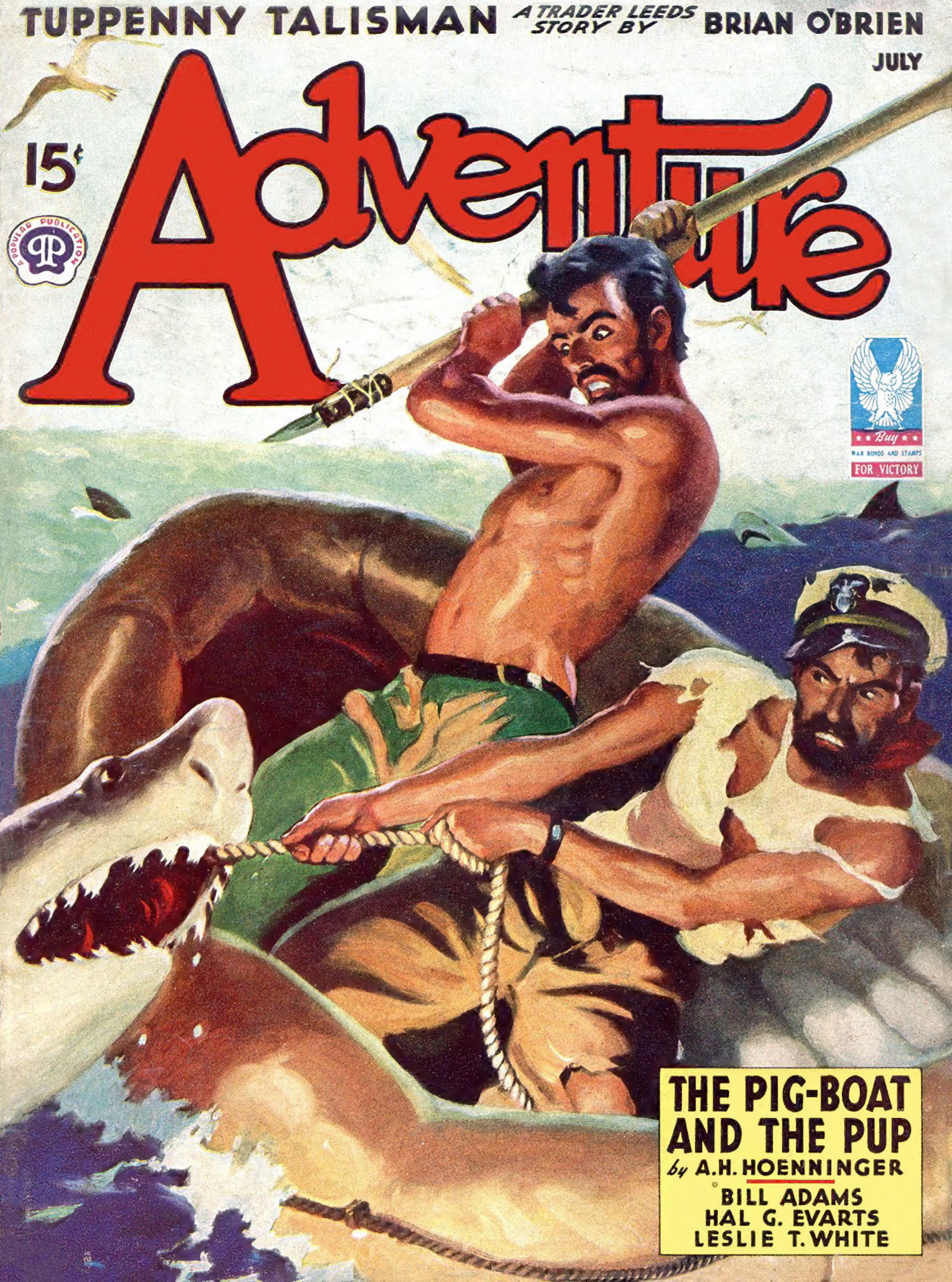

THE PIG-BOAT AND THE PUP

by A.H. HOENNINGER

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THE AUGUST ISSUE WILL BE OUT JULY 9TH

Adventure

(Registered U. S. Patent Office)

Vol. 109, No. 3 for July, 1943 Best of New Stories

How Are Your Hands? (verse) . . . . . BILL ADAMS 8
How about you, mister? Have you stains on your hands?

Tuppenny Talisman (a novelette) . . . . . BRIAN O'BRIEN 10
Mr. Leeds, the Cameroons-Cockney, trades mumbo-jumbo with a white witch doctor whose feeble fetish was the sign of the hooked cross.

Sew-Sew Woman . . . . . REESE WOLFE 27
Two hundred and sixty-eight dollars—plus extra port charges. That was the unwelcome legacy Oscar Mokua left on the debit side of Captain Blanton's ledger the night he jumped ship in Batavia.

The Pig-Boat and the Pup (a novelette) . . . . A. H. HOENNINGER 36
There's nothing new about hunting jaguars with dogs and subs with radio direction finders, but to reverse the procedure and bag *el tigre* with the beam and U-boats with a terrier—That's something else again!

The Exile . . . . . HAL G. EVARTS 60
Stamped on the stock of Count Mitrov's Remington was the double eagle of Imperial Russia. And stamped on his heart was the hate he had nursed for the Soviets for years. Then, one night on the Turkestan border, a Red general wandered into range of the White marksman's weapon.

Heroes Are Made . . . . . KEITH EDGAR 67
Crazy McIntosh never was a hogger to stop and pick daisies when a train had to be hauled from here to there. Take, for instance, the time he high-balled that load of munitions across Canada like it was a passenger run.

Six Weeks South of Texas (2nd part of 3) . . . . . LESLIE T. WHITE 74
Creased by outlaw lead and left for vulture meat in the Mato Grosso jungle, Randy Dent regains consciousness only to find the dread *Capitura*—Brazil's border-rangers—have put a price upon his head.

Guidons Away! (a fact story) . . . . . W. M. KARTZMARK 103
125 miles in 30 hours, in heavy marching order and ready for action at the end of the ride. That was Troop G's record in the summer of '08.

Formula for Fear . . . . . WILLIAM BRANDON 106
Life to Longstreet was a simple mathematical matter of adding this to this and getting that, with the human factor always eliminated—even if it had to be done with a knife.

The Camp-Fire . . . . . Where readers, writers and adventurers meet 116

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Cover painted for Adventure by Maurice Bower *Kenneth S. White, Editor*

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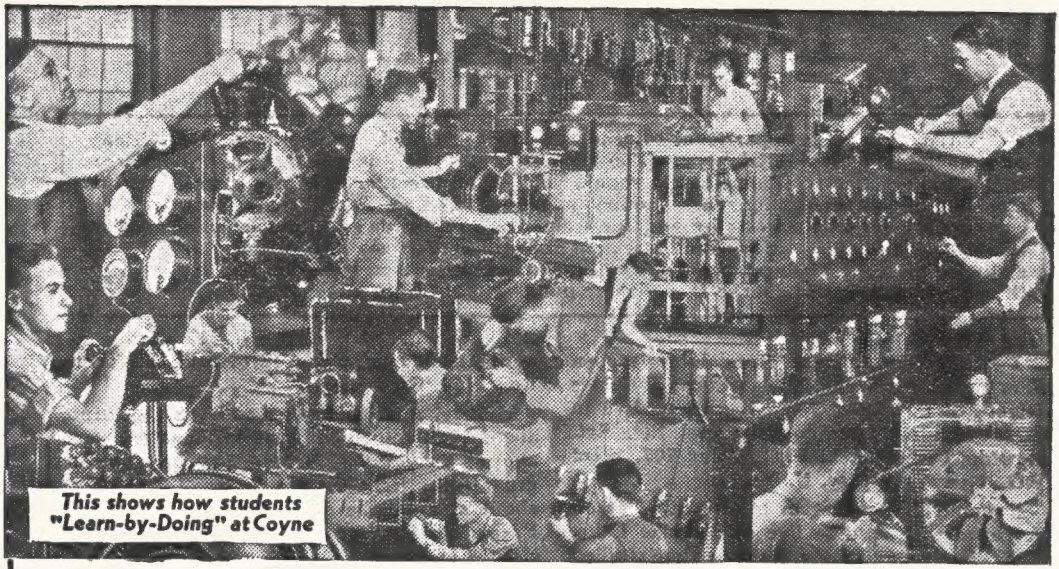

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ELECTRONICS included! Coyne gives you practical work in this field that has grown so fast the past few years and is due for a great future after the war!

LOST TRAILS

NOTE: We offer this department to readers who wish to get in touch again with friends or acquaintances separated by years or chance. Give your own name and full address. Please notify *Adventure* immediately should you establish contact with the person you are seeking. Space permitting, each inquiry addressed to *Lost Trails* will be run in three consecutive issues. Requests by and for women are declined, as not considered effective in a magazine published for men. *Adventure* also will decline any notice that may not seem a sincere effort to recover an old friendship, or for any other reason in the judgment of the editorial staff. No charge is made for publication of notices.

I would like to hear from John Rueben Sharp who was in the Marine Corps at Parris Island, S. C. 1919-1923. He used to live in St. Joseph and Kansas City, Mo. Stf. Sgt. Newton Tushoph, U.S.M.C., Navy 107, Fleet P.O., New York City, N. Y.

I should like to get in touch with Curzon P. Howe who used to live at Saranac Lake, N. Y. He is about 32 and at one time studied dentistry at, I believe, either St. Lawrence or Rensselaer Polytech. Please write P. B. Freer, Box 4, Liberty, Ohio.

Persons named Page from Sagrada, Camden Co., Mo., or relatives of William or Sanford Brown or any Nelsons from Seligman, Barry Co., Mo., are requested to write George E. Page, Gen. Del., Brawley, Calif.

Alvin U. Hodgdon, known as "Tex Ranger" was last heard of in Minnesota headed for either Chicago or New York. Age 44, he travels around playing a guitar and singing. Anyone knowing of his whereabouts please communicate with his brother-in-law, Pfc. Lee Kay, c/o *Adventure*.

Everett Ruess, 27, cowboy artist and writer, formerly of Los Angeles, last seen in St. Petersburg, Fla., May 1935. Anyone having information of whereabouts please communicate with Burton Bowen, VAF 2, Bath, N. Y.

Anyone knowing the whereabouts of Arthur Leo Messier, last seen about ten years ago in New York City and now believed in the West, please write Charles H. Hoffmann, c/o Veterans Hospital, Tucson, Ariz.

Any information concerning Doug Hayward, age 23, last residing in Chambersburg, Pa., will be most welcome and appreciated by Pvt. Peter Dunsky, c/o *Adventure*.

Any information as to the whereabouts of Elmer McMann, last heard of in Mt. Pleasant, Texas, 16 years ago, will be appreciated by his son, Charles McMann, Box B, Florence, Ariz.

Would like to find my brothers Leslie and Allan Towns, last heard from in Winnipeg, Can., many years ago. Leslie is a World War veteran. If anyone knows their whereabouts, or their children, please inform W. J. Towns, Box 2460, Globe, Ariz.

Herbert A. Roig, known to be in California about 1929 and to be living in Houston, Tex., about 1939. Age 41, height 5-10, weight 150, gray eyes, light brown hair. Information about him will be appreciated by his friend Frank Landon, 1146 Webster St., San Francisco, Cal.

Robert Lee Johnson, 52, last heard of at Barron, Wis., in 1911. Prior to that had been at Leishman's Camp, Mile 48, A.C.R.R., had worked in railroad shops at Cape Girardeau, Mo., and on section at Barron, Wis. Later in Cal., Ariz., N. M. Talked of going to Alaska or South America. Anyone having knowledge of his whereabouts write P. O. Box 684, Oklahoma City, Okla.

Any information about my old friend, Peter Battleshiel, would be appreciated. We were in the army together several years. He is French-Canadian, about 47 years old and, I believe, lives in or near Detroit. Please communicate with Laurence J. Brown, RFD No. 2, Harrisburg, Ark.

Have seen your ad in Lost Trails of my old buddy, Laurence J. Brown, and am writing him tonight. This was the first I have heard of him since Nov., 1922—over twenty years—a good buddy.

—Peter Battishill,
4560 Commonwealth,
Detroit, Mich.

I can never thank Adventure enough for locating my friend, Peter Battishill. I received a letter from him yesterday from Detroit. Someone who knew him sent the notice to him.

Yours,
—Laurence J. Brown,
R. D. No. 2,
Harrisburg, Ark.

Notice:—We regret the misspelling of Mr. Battishill's name in our original notice and are glad that despite the error his friend was able to contact him. We suggest that in requests similar to the above proper names be printed when it is impossible to type them to avoid the possibility of misreading handwritten communications.—Ed.

BILL, YOU SURE HAVE A SWELL BUILD! DID YOU TRAIN FOR A LONG TIME ?
ABSOLUTELY NOT! THE ATLAS DYNAMIC TENSION SYSTEM MAKES MUSCLES GROW FAST!

Here's the Kind of MEN I Build!

Charles Atlas

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I DON'T care how old or young you are, or how ashamed of your present physical condition you may be. If you can simply raise your arm and flex it I can add SOLID MUSCLE to your biceps—yes, on each arm—in double-quick time! Only 15 minutes a day—right in your own home—is all the time I ask of you! And there's no cost if I fail.

I can broaden your shoulders, strengthen your back, develop your whole muscular system INSIDE and OUTSIDE! I can add inches to your chest, give you a vise-like grip, make those legs of yours lithe and powerful. I can shoot new strength into your old backbone, exercise those inner organs, help you cram your body so full of pep, vigor and red-blooded vitality that you won't feel there's even "standing room" left for weakness and that lazy feeling! Before I get through with you I'll have your whole frame "measured" to a nice, new, beautiful suit of muscle!

What's My Secret?

"Dynamic Tension!" That's the ticket! The *identical natural* method that I myself developed to change my body from the scrawny, skinny-chested weakling I was at 17 to my present super-man physique! Thousands of other fellows are becoming marvelous physical specimens—*my way.* I give you *no gadgets or contraptions to fool with.* When you have learned to develop your strength through *"Dynamic Tension"* you can laugh at *artificial* muscle-makers. You simply utilize the DORMANT muscle-power in your own God-given body—watch it increase and multiply double-quick into real, solid LIVE MUSCLE.

Only 15 Minutes a Day

My method—*"Dynamic Tension"*—will turn the trick for you. No *theory*—every exercise is *practical.* And, man, *so easy!* Spend only 15 minutes a day in your own home. From the very start you'll be using my method of *"Dynamic Tension"* almost unconsciously every minute of the day — walking, bending over, etc.—to BUILD MUSCLE and VITALITY.

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In it I talk to you in straight-from-the-shoulder language. Packed with inspirational pictures of myself and pupils—fellows who became NEW MEN in strength, my way. Let me show you what I helped THEM do. See what I can do for YOU. For a real thrill, send for this book *today.* AT ONCE. CHARLES ATLAS, Dept. 837, 115 East 23rd Street, New York, N. Y.

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115 East 23rd Street, New York, N. Y.

I want the proof that your system of "Dynamic Tension" will help make a New Man of me—give me a healthy, husky body and big muscular development. Send me your free book, "Everlasting Health and Strength."

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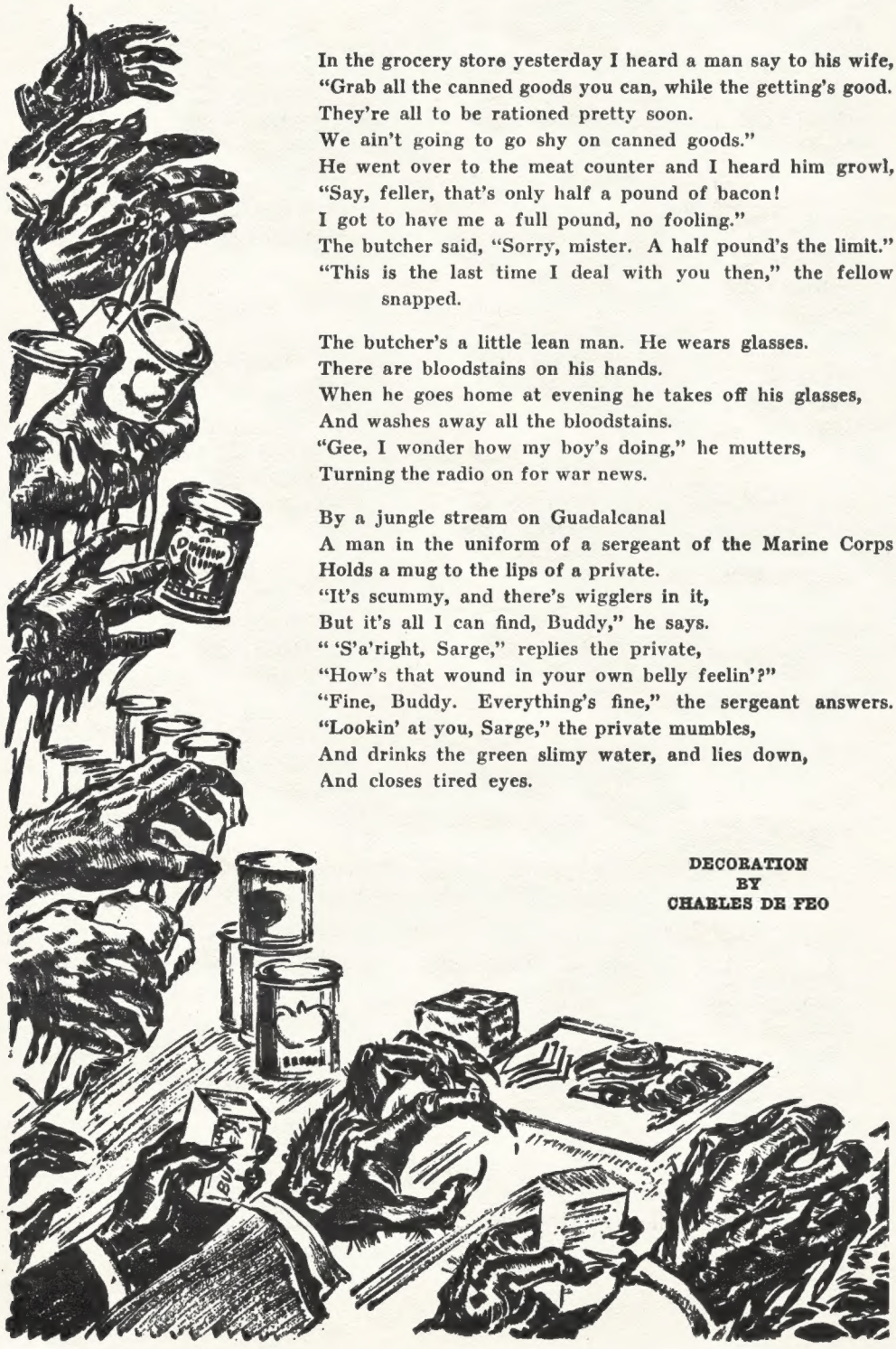
HOW ARE YOUR



In the grocery store yesterday I heard a man say to his wife,
"Grab all the canned goods you can, while the getting's good.
They're all to be rationed pretty soon.
We ain't going to go shy on canned goods."
He went over to the meat counter and I heard him growl,
"Say, feller, that's only half a pound of bacon!
I got to have me a full pound, no fooling."
The butcher said, "Sorry, mister. A half pound's the limit."
"This is the last time I deal with you then," the fellow snapped.

The butcher's a little lean man. He wears glasses.
There are bloodstains on his hands.
When he goes home at evening he takes off his glasses,
And washes away all the bloodstains.
"Gee, I wonder how my boy's doing," he mutters,
Turning the radio on for war news.

By a jungle stream on Guadalcanal
A man in the uniform of a sergeant of the Marine Corps
Holds a mug to the lips of a private.
"It's scummy, and there's wigglers in it,
But it's all I can find, Buddy," he says.
" 'S'a'right, Sarge," replies the private,
"How's that wound in your own belly feelin'?"
"Fine, Buddy. Everything's fine," the sergeant answers.
"Lookin' at you, Sarge," the private mumbles,
And drinks the green slimy water, and lies down,
And closes tired eyes.

DECORATION
BY
CHARLES DE FEO

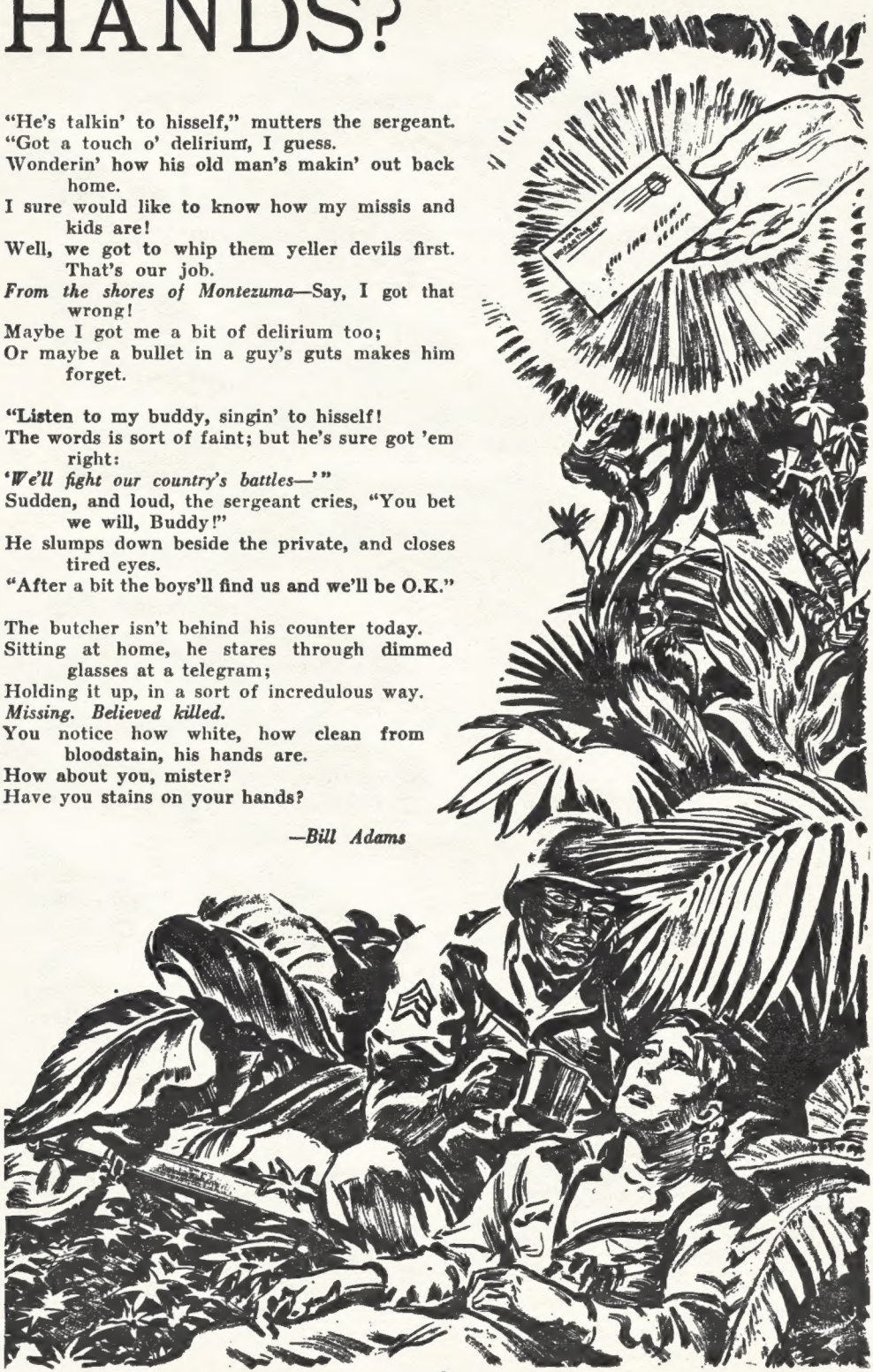
HANDS?

"He's talkin' to hisself," mutters the sergeant.
"Got a touch o' delirium, I guess.
Wonderin' how his old man's makin' out back home.
I sure would like to know how my missis and kids are!
Well, we got to whip them yeller devils first. That's our job.
From the shores of Montezuma—Say, I got that wrong!
Maybe I got me a bit of delirium too;
Or maybe a bullet in a guy's guts makes him forget.

"Listen to my buddy, singin' to hisself!
The words is sort of faint; but he's sure got 'em right:
'*We'll fight our country's battles*—'"
Sudden, and loud, the sergeant cries, "You bet we will, Buddy!"
He slumps down beside the private, and closes tired eyes.
"After a bit the boys'll find us and we'll be O.K."

The butcher isn't behind his counter today.
Sitting at home, he stares through dimmed glasses at a telegram;
Holding it up, in a sort of incredulous way.
Missing. Believed killed.
You notice how white, how clean from bloodstain, his hands are.
How about you, mister?
Have you stains on your hands?

—*Bill Adams*



TUPPENNY TALISMAN

ILLUSTRATED BY
HAMILTON GREENE

MR. CHARLES LEEDS, palm oil trader, groaned feebly, blinking through his mosquito net. The smell of wood smoke, wet earth and natives came to him. Through the tent opening he could see dense forest and the glare of a river.

Then a black, scarred face bent over him and Sala, his Bulu servant, held a cup of water under the net.

"Drink, *n'tangan.*"

"What? Oh—'ow long I bin 'ere?"

"Seven sleeps. Master very sick."

"Seven days? Phew!"

Mr. Leeds tried to sit up but fell back on a soppy pillow. His mouth seemed

A TRADER LEEDS STORY

By BRIAN O'BRIEN

full of cotton, his limbs too heavy to move.

"Malaria," he groaned. "Gimme quinine."

Sala offered a bottle and Mr. Leeds shook ten pills into a thin, yellow hand and swallowed them, shuddering.

"Tea."

He sipped that, drowsily felt Sala remove sweat-soaked blankets; groaningly submitted to powerful rubbing and went to sleep.

He felt better, though still shaky, when he awakened late that afternoon.

"Food," he ordered, and spooned a can of soup.

Then he swung pitifully thin, bony legs over the side of his camp cot, reached for a faded raincoat which he shrugged over bowed shoulders, crammed a battered helmet on his bald head and stepped groggily outside the tent.

The sun boiled down on the Campo River, still and green as bottle glass

"Wah! È Ké!" howled the natives as the two fearsome figures began to prance before the fire.

under an exhausted sky that was a narrow strip between dense, overhanging trees.

Two dugout canoes laden with trade goods were moored to the steep bank. Paddlers grinned up, saluting the small, bearded figure.

"*M'bolo, n'tangan,*" came their soft Bulu voices. "*Jomolo?*"

"Nay, I am not sick now," he told them.

He glanced up and down the river.

"We are close to the town of Ombin," he said to Sala. "Why was I not taken there?"

Sala stirred the soft earth with his toe.

"Master was too sick. More better stop here."

Mr. Leeds eyed him suspiciously.

"There is mystery here," he said slowly. "We will go to Ombin."

"Better we do not go there," said Sala, head down.

"Why? The people of Ombin and their chief, Eboro, are my friends."

"Trouble," muttered the Bulu.

"Load the canoe," snapped Mr. Leeds.

HE climbed down the bank and took his place in the forward canoe, shaking his head to remove the muzziness that comes from a bad bout of malaria. The two craft sheered into midstream and glided up-river.

Suddenly Mr. Leeds' eyes, small, blue and faded under shaggy brows, descended from their inspection of the wooded banks to the oily surface of the river. It was sullied with ash that streamed in a long curve from a sandbar upstream. He motioned Sala in the bow to catch something that floated near. It was a bit of charred cloth.

Now natives do not burn cloth ordinarily, and Mr. Leeds was alarmed. He eyed the massive shoulders of Sala, wielding a great spear-bladed paddle.

"What says the drum talk?" he asked softly.

Sala jumped, his paddle faltered, then rested on the gunwale.

"Speak," insisted Mr. Leeds.

"There has been a seeking-out of an evil spirit, and a trial by sass wood."

"That I know," snapped the old man. "Pull in to that sandbar."

On it were the ashes of a large fire, still smoldering. Many footprints pocked the sand and here and there it was caked with blood. Over it hung a stench that almost turned Mr. Leeds' feeble stomach.

"Make for the town of Ombin," he gasped. "Why have the river people done this thing?" he demanded. "Have I not taught them better things?"

Sala coughed.

"The drums say there is a new master at Ekin," he said slowly.

"A new master at my place? What the hell's been goin' on while I been sick?" Mr. Leeds poked Sala with his rifle muzzle. "What is this to do with sass wood murder at Ombin?"

"He is a maker of magic."

Mr. Leeds' wrinkled face was bleak under its torpedo beard and heavy, drooping mustache. He watched a break in the forest on the north bank ahead. A few canoes were drawn up on a shelving beach and the glossy leaves of bananas advertised the presence of a village. But there was no sign of life; the canoes were unguarded.

This was ominous; usually the villagers turned out in boisterous welcome when Mr. Leeds visited them.

For thirty years he had traded up and down the Campo River, natural boundary between Cameroon and Spanish Muni. He regarded the river as his home, the Bulus as his friends. The only white man in many days' trek, he had come to be the unofficial ruler of the river people. He spoke their language, he even understood the two-toned drum talk they used to carry news and messages through the unexplored forests that cover that part of Africa. There was only one other white man who could comprehend the drums and that was Hope, an American missionary at Kribi, up the coast.

"They're me pals, see?" Mr. Leeds told Hope, once. "They likes me an' I likes them. I gotta make me livin' with 'em, don't I? So I looks arter 'em."

Many a time Mr. Leeds had stood between the Bulus and the official law from Yaunde, capital of the colony. He

saw to it that they were not forced to pay too much tax. He solved their problems, judged them in matters requiring his opinion, bought their produce at a fair profit, and in his small way carried to them some of the less harmful benefits of civilization.

But the sass wood ordeal dated back to cannibal days.

"Thought I'd broke 'em o' that years ago," he mumbled to himself.

In the early days, witchcraft governed the river and those suspected of evil were ruthlessly butchered. Witch doctors held the Bulus under a spell of terror, for they and no others could tell when evil spirits were present. Thus they accused anyone they wished out of the way.

A "smelling out" was conducted, when witch doctors danced obscene dances, rattling magic objects outside each hut until they reached the hut of their victim. He was accused of nurturing an evil spirit and forced to drink an infusion of sass bark. If he showed signs of giddiness after drinking, it was known that the devil was in him. He was speared to death and burned. If he showed no signs of guilt he was allowed to go free. But not for long, for sass wood is a deadly poison.

Mr. Leeds signed to pull in to the bank. He stepped out of the canoe closely followed by Sala.

"Gun, master."

Mr. Leeds' face as he looked at his servant caused the Bulu to step backwards.

"È ké!" Someone will surely suffer," he mumbled to a paddler.

AS HE walked through a narrow trail from the river he was aware of a boding silence that was broken by the sudden squawk of a chicken.

Stepping between dense banana stalks he entered a wide compound enclosed by two parallel rows of bark and palm leaf huts. Each had a small door from which came the blue reek of smoke. At both ends of the village were large wall-less shelters; one the palaver house where village elders met to discuss, the other a rest-house for travelers. But both were empty. And over all the forest crowded jealously.

Mr. Leeds walked across the silent street to a hut larger than the rest. There was a fetish symbol on the wall and the sound of furtive movement inside.

"O, Eboro," he called. "Is this the fashion of greeting a friend?"

There was no answer. Mr. Leeds breathed heavily through his large, veined nose.

"Come outa that, yer leathery-'ided old skellington," he roared, "or I'll come in arter yer!"

Someone coughed and a dirty face appeared in the doorway. It was wrinkled and scarred in the tribal pattern and still bore traces of ochre. The eyes, rheumy and shifty, were cast down. The chief gripped a polished staff in misshapen, greasy fingers and stepped carefully over the high doorsill, fidgeting with a strip of faded bark cloth that was bunched about his ancient loins.

"M'bolo, n'tangan," he mumbled.

"M'bolo, me eye," snapped Mr. Leeds. "Wot the 'ell's the matter with yer?"

The chief stood on one foot, the other rubbing his withered shin.

"Why do you hide from me, O chief?" demanded Mr. Leeds. "Have you done wrong?"

"Nay, *n'tangan.*"

"Did I not teach thee many years ago that the ordeal by sass wood is wrong?"

The chief scratched unhappily.

"The drums said that you were sick unto death. They spoke for another *n'tangan,* a new master, who has told us to go back to the old times."

"To killing and the taking of women from other towns?"

"Aye, *n'tangan.*"

Sala made a sound and Mr. Leeds looked about him.

Beside every hut stood a man with slim throwing spear. Their faces were barred fiercely with yellow mud, feathers decorated their heads and their feet moved restlessly.

"So the young men of Ombin bear spears when I come," said Mr. Leeds bitterly. "The last time I came here they called me father and mother. Once they were my sons, well beloved, but now they

act as if I were an utter stranger."

"It was the word of one who said he was greater than you."

"Have you seen this magic maker?"

"Nay, but the drums—"

"The drums will call for the man who died by sass wood," said Mr. Leeds nastily. "Who will bring him?"

"*È ké!*"

"Come, Sala." Mr. Leeds turned away. "It seems we have been too long away from Ekin."

Without another glance at the spearmen he walked out of the village. He made a slightly ridiculous figure, small, bent, in worn shorts, thin legs and large boots. His helmet almost covered his face; only the beard, sharp and truculent, jutted over his scraggy throat. But he walked with dignity.

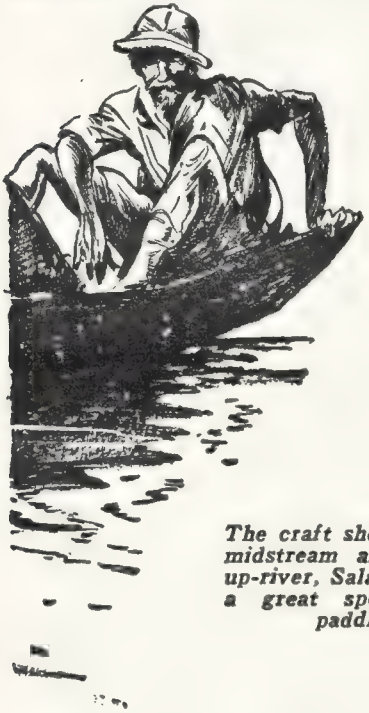
The paddlers took their places and the two dugouts backed out into midstream. The men of Ombin stood like storks on the bank watching silently until the canoe disappeared around a bend.

Mr. Leeds leaned weakly against his kit. He was hurt and angry. He loved the Bulus; they were like merry children, happy brown figures who hunted their meat, grew their manioc and were peace-

ful. Who was this white man who dared stir them up? Who was trying to destroy the work of years? Mr. Leeds understood the primitive people of the forest. He knew their habits and wild impulses. The temptation to return to the old bloodthirsty days before the whites came was strong, but it could only bring troops and death and burned villages up and down his beloved river.

"'Nough trouble in the world as it is," he told himself. "All the bleedin' world at war and now some crazy blighter tries to make mischief on my river."

They passed a canoe landing that was deserted.



The craft sheered into midstream and glided up-river, Sala wielding a great spear-bladed paddle.

"We will not stop at a town," Mr. Leeds decided. "Pull in to that sandbar."

A crocodile slid silently into the river as Sala cleared the sand to put up Mr. Leeds' tent. The paddlers built their fire and squatted about it talking softly in the dusk. Mr. Leeds drank some gin, refused food, and lay on his cot; he'd need his strength to handle the interloper at Ekin.

Suddenly it was dark. All about them the forest came to life with chirping and movement. Something crashed far off and a fighting crocodile bellowed downstream. Fireflies flashed their green sparks against the somber wall of trees and mysterious ripples, arching from the darkness, reflected the fire with scarlet flashes.

Then above the buzz of talk from the paddlers came an unevenly spaced thudding.

Danduda — dan-dan-dan — dandu-dududu — du-dan—

It was like a muffled voice calling through the forest. The drumbeats formed syllables and the skillful play of two tones gave them meaning. It was the secret language of the Bulu drums which made sense with tone and rhythm.

Mr. Leeds made out the drum name of the chief at Ekin, near his compound far down-river. Then there was another name: "Witchcraft will kill at night." Then, "He walks without sound." That was the *n'dan* of Mr. Leeds, given him years before when his youthful, catlike skill in traveling forest trails had so impressed the natives. He listened to a repetition of the message, and knew that someone was warning the river that he returned to Ekin.

"Keep watch this night," he called to Sala. "We start at false dawn."

Then he carefully tucked the mosquito net under him and slept.

He awakened to the weird, descending scale of the brain fever bird. It tinkled through the trees with the purity of a silver bell. The sky was gray and the paddlers shivered as they puffed their little brass pipes while they toasted bits of manioc kank. Sala dismantled the cot and tent, stowing it in the canoe while Mr. Leeds noisily sipped scalding tea.

The sky darkened as they started down-river, but only for half an hour. Then it brightened and flocks of gray parrots screamed over the river. Once an elephant plunged back from a shallow pool and wheeled ponderously to climb the steep bank. The paddlers grinned at his awkward efforts as his powerful hindquarters strained, scrambling for foothold in the crumbling red earth. But he made it and lumbered off through the

dense undergrowth squealing furiously.

It was about that time that drums tapped out their warning, and Mr. Leeds knew that dark eyes watched them from the bank.

Late that afternoon he called a halt.

"Pull under the trees," he ordered. "We will pass by night. No fires and no talk."

After dark they emerged from the shadow of leaves and sought the channel.

"Quiet when we pass a landing," he ordered. "We will travel by night and rest by day."

By dawn they were many miles down-river. Mr. Leeds grinned from the shelter of mangrove branches as he listened to drums.

"No man has seen him," they called. "He has not passed this place. He has gone like a watersnake."

Later, a drum down-river tapped through the evening quiet:

"Look out! Look out! He walks without sound. He cannot fly like a bird."

Mr. Leeds grinned sourly at that play on his name; this was not Bulu humor.

IT was early morning some days later when they reached Mr. Leeds' compound, half a mile west of Ekin landing.

It was a square cleared in the mahogany forest of the north bank and extending two hundred yards inland. The clearing was lined with small huts for labor and sheds for storage. At the back, close against the dense bush, was Mr. Leeds' hut—built of mud and roofed wth palm frond mats. It was on a slight eminence, surrounded by a veranda and shaded from the sun by massive, over-hanging branches.

Someone yelled as the canoes put in to the bank, and natives rushed to greet them. Dogs galloped about, wagging tightly curved tails. But Mr. Leeds stared past them to where a white man, seated calmly on his veranda, watched.

The natives fell back as, breathing heavily, the old man stepped from his canoe, handed his rifle to Sala and marched the length of the immaculately swept compound towards his house. As he drew near, the man who has usurped it stood up.

He was tall, big, with an enormous belly. His face was fat and pallid, drooping in flaccid folds about a heavy, sandy mustache. His head, small and pointed, was cropped to a reddish bristle. His eyes, almost hidden in liver-colored pouches were yellowish in the sunshine.

Suddenly he ran with surprising lightness down the veranda steps and moved forward smoothly, grinning and exposing ruined teeth. His eyes glistened and he held out a huge, freckled hand.

"How do you do, my dear fellow?" he shouted in a harsh, strident voice. "I am glad to see you; waited for weeks. They told me you were dead, the lying swine. Welcome. Welcome indeed!"

Mr. Leeds stood like a fool while his hand was pumped up and down. Then he examined the man from the pointed, yellow high shoes, past white duck trousers, a collarless, white shirt, to his twitching brow.

"Well," he said at last. "It's bloody nice o' yer ter welcome me to me own 'ouse. Nah, what—"

"Think nothing of it, my dear chap. Come along, come along; breakfast will be ready in a few minutes."

The enormous hand, flabby, yet pulsing with strength, slid across Mr. Leeds' shoulder and he was half shoved, half carried up the veranda stairs.

"There, sit down, rest yourself. Have a gargle."

"Well, I'll be a nawsty nime!" breathed Mr. Leeds.

"Haw haw haw!" bellowed the large man. "Bit of a joker, what? Damn good, damn good!"

"Nah, wait a minute," said Mr. Leeds with difficult calm. "I don't know 'oo yer are, an' I don't care. But wot's the idea of movin' in 'ere and tikin' over my 'ouse as if you'd bought it. I—"

"Oh, I can explain that, my dear man. Just rest, calm yourself. Have a little breakfast. Boy! Boy!! Come here, you bush pig. Bring a drink for the gentleman."

MR. LEEDS glared with popeyed astonishment while a native he'd never seen before produced a bottle of his gin.

"Help yourself, my dear fellow."

"You bet yer sweet life I'll 'elp meself," he stuttered, snatching the bottle furiously.

"Fine, fine."

"Shut up!" yelled Mr. Leeds. "What —"

"There, there, you're all worked up. Take a little gargle."

"I'll tike a poke at yore fat mug if yer don't shut up!" yelled the overwrought Mr. Leeds. "Will yer be—so—bleedin'—kind—as ter—explain yer—bleedin'—self?"

"Explain? Why, certainly." The voice was warm, indulgent. "I came here to do business, found the place deserted, heard you were dead and took over. Imagine my sur—"

"Yus, yer hi-jackin' crook."

"Now, now, no hard words, my dear old chap, no hard words. You can't blame me, you know. Found no one here. Thought—"

"I know wot yer thought," sneered Mr. Leeds. "Yer thought ye'd tike over my trade. Well, ye won't, see? All yer guff abaht magic and old customs! Yer oughta be ashamed, stirring up the natives like that."

"There must be some mistake," protested the large man. "I had no idea, my dear fellow. All I wanted was to set up a bit of business—"

"Wait. Fust, there ain't no trade; I got it all. Took thirty year to do it. And now there ain't enough for two. Now, who *are* yer, and where d'ye come from?"

"Oh, of course, stupid of me. Forgot to tell you," babbled the other. "I'm Julian Spencer."

"Never 'eard the name," snapped Mr. Leeds rudely. "Where d'yer come from. An' "—his voice rose—"wot the 'ell you doin' 'ere?"

Spencer looked pained.

"I *told* you, my dear fellow. Saw the place deserted. Word of honor as a gentleman. You know men die in the bush, lost, killed. Thought I'd carry on, don't you know."

There was something so flamboyant about the man's speech that Mr. Leeds began to feel scared. Was he mad?

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1. WASH FACE thoroughly with hot water and soap to soften beard and eliminate accumulated grit that dulls shaving edges

2. APPLY LATHER or Brushless Shaving Cream while face is wet. If lather is used, dip your brush in water frequently

3. TWO EDGES double blade life. Marks indicated above identify edges, enabling you to give both equal use and get extra shaves

4. CLEAN BLADE in razor by loosening handle, then rinsing in hot water and shaking. Wiping the blade is likely to damage the edges

"Came up from Rio Benito on the Spanish side," Spencer went on. "Got a bit of money, you know. Thought I'd like to trade here. Far away from the war, and all that. Blessed, peaceful spot. Of course"—his flabby face drooped—"if you don't want me here, I'll leave."

"I don't," Mr. Leeds said promptly. "An' the Bulus don't neither. Your ways won't work 'ere, Mister Spencer. You better beat it back to Benito if that's where yer come from."

"Would you care to sell your trading rights?" Spencer's voice was heavy and smooth as silk.

"I would not. I bin 'ere thirty year. The Bulus was cannibals when I came. I taught 'em manners and taught 'em the good of trade. They trusts me and I trusts them, because we *likes* each other, see? I ain't 'avin' you messin' with 'em. So you can tike yerself off whenever ye've a mind to."

"Ah well," sighed Spencer, "perhaps you're right. I had hopes of this lovely, peaceful place. It is so beautiful; the trees, so green and lush, the forest primeval. The river, so calm and restful after all the struggle and turmoil of the outside world. The gentle Bulus; their brilliant eyes, their grace, their soft, warm voices. The little—"

"'Ere, 'ere, yer don't 'ave ter mike poems abaht 'em." Mr. Leeds was embarrassed. "They ain't so bleedin' lovely all the time. I don't think yer got the right temp'rament for this place. You better get 'ome where yer belong." By this time he was convinced that Julian Spencer did not possess all his buttons.

"Ah well, I shall leave. I shall go down-river and find my way back to Rio Benito, a failure."

"That's settled then," Mr. Leeds said briskly. "Nah, *wiv* yer permission, I'll 'ave a bit o' tommy."

Mr. Leeds ate heartily, aware that Spencer was watching carefully. He had an uneasy feeling that he was not to be rid of the flabby-faced giant so easily.

IT WAS noon before Spencer, followed by natives carrying his kit, went down to the river. A long, mahogany dugout floated at the bank and into it Spencer wedged a deck chair while the natives loaded his goods. Four paddlers took their places and Spencer, enormous in a wide, white pith helmet looked down at Mr. Leeds.

"My dear fellow," he said heavily, "it's been a pleasure, a real pleasure. You are sure, now, that you will not consider selling me your trade privileges, good will and all that sort of thing?"

"No."

"Ah well, just thought I'd ask. No hard feelings, what?"

"None," said Mr. Leeds dryly.

"Then, to prove that I can lose like a gentleman, and as a token of my regard, I'd like to leave you this bottle of Scotch whiskey; a gargle that is without peer. Take it, my dear fellow, so that I'll know that I haven't offended you. When you drink it think of me, poor old Spencer, who tried to make a success of things in Cameroon, and failed. Good-bye, old fellow, good-bye, and the very best of luck."

Mr. Leeds' hand was squeezed in a soft, rubbery grip.

"Thanks," he managed to get out. "Good-bye."

"Cheerio, cheerio. All the best."

Mr. Leeds watched the canoe slide around a bend, then went back to his hut.

"Funny bloke," he thought. "Ought not to be traveling without a keeper. Spoke like a gent too. Or did he? There was something overdone about his talk. Damn him, he talked like a bloomin' stage actor."

He put the whiskey on a stool and called Sala.

"Send the chief to me," he ordered and sat down. Then he jumped up to examine his bedroom. Nothing seemed disturbed. He hurried out to his sheds. They were locked fast.

"Well, he ain't took nothink," he decided.

A tall young Bulu in tattered singlet and an ancient straw hat decorated with parrot feathers shuffled uneasily outside his hut.

"*M'bolo*," he greeted guiltily.

"Aye," said Mr. Leeds. "What is the news since I went away?"

"The other white man came," the

chief reported. "He said that he comes from a race of god-men who will bring great riches and much happiness to all men."

"What did he want for that happiness?"

"Nothing, for he is a god. He has done magic things. He has taken eggs from my head where no egg was. He has found money where there is no money. He—"

"Old stuff," snapped Mr. Leeds. He remembered performing a few conjuring tricks himself in the old days, when sleight-of-hand was part of the trader's sales talk. "What else?"

"He said that we are free men, that we may slay our enemies and take their women. He says that the governor fears him."

"He does, does he? What else?"

"He said that you are dead, that he has come to take your place. He said that your teaching is foolish, that you have robbed the Bulu people."

Mr. Leeds sat down suddenly. He felt old, hopeless.

"Hear me, O chief," he said quietly. "I have lived among you for many years. I have been your father and your mother. I have shown you good things. How is it that when I am gone you will believe the word of a stranger?"

"He was a white man and therefore a god."

Mr. Leeds digested this. After all he had told them the same thing.

"He spoke the Bulu tongue even as you. Thus we thought he was friend as well as god."

"Spoke Bulu?" Mr. Leeds gasped.

"Aye, *n'tangan*."

That man wasn't crazy, Mr. Leeds decided. There was a lot more in this than met the eye.

"And what did this god say when I came back, after he had told thee I was dead?"

"That he had called thee from death to talk with him. When he has finished with thee he will send thee back to death again."

"Will he, by Gawd!"

"Thus he spoke."

"Can he hear the drum talk?"

"No, master."

"Go."

The Bulu saluted and left the hut.

MR. LEEDS reached automatically for his gin. But his fingers closed around the bottle of whiskey left by Spencer. Twisting off the seal he opened the corkscrew from his knife and pulled the cork. He poured a peg into a glass and sipped it. Bit smoky, he decided, reaching for a water bottle. But his elbow knocked the glass over. He bent to pick it up and lurched giddily to the beaten earth floor.

"What the 'ell?" he mumbled.

A bitter pain pierced his head and he felt a peppery burning in his throat. His tongue felt dry. The room swam about him.

"Sala!" he croaked, crowing for air.

The Bulu looked in.

"Water!" he gasped. "Water, an' plenty salt."

Sala ran in with a leaking calabash and Mr. Leeds managed to seize a salt cellar on the table. He drank heavily, the water pouring over his face. Then he upended the spout over his mouth and drank again.

Then he was violently sick.

For half an hour he lay on the floor, spent. His head swam and he could scarcely see. But after a while he felt better and struggled to his chair.

"The dirty bahstid!" he whispered.

Panting, he wiped his eyes and picked up the whiskey bottle. There was something beside the whiskey smell; something he could not identify. He carefully corked the bottle and put it away.

"Mighta knew it," he scolded himself. "The big, greasy, murderin' dawg. I'll go 'rahnd 'im like a cooper 'rahnd a cawsk."

He crawled to his bed and lay down. He felt small and alone, somehow defenseless. So Spencer was trying to kill him. What for? Mr. Leeds fought to think clearly. What did the big man want? It couldn't be just trade. Why did he want Mr. Leeds out of the way?

"Sala," he called weakly.

The Bulu appeared, his scarred face concerned.

"Master sick?"

"Plenty. Now go tell the chief to make drum talk for news of the white man."

He sat inert, listening to the throb of the call drum as it pounded its message through the afternoon stillness.

In an hour came a reply.

"He has gone, gone, into the creeks at the river mouth. No man lives where he has gone. It is on the Spanish side."

"Hmm, there ain't nothink there," Mr. Leeds thought. Then he called Sala again.

"Hear me," he began. "Here is a bad palaver, a devil palaver. You will do as I say and you will talk to no man. Is it understood?"

"Aye, *n'tangan.*"

"Now, take my camp cot and food for two days to the sugar camp that is dead, down the river."

"Is the *n'tangan* going there? Surely it is a place of evil spirits."

"Do as I say. I will walk with you if you fear."

He watched while Sala packed the necessary things, and picking up the whiskey bottle he led the way through the back of the hut.

FOUR miles away down an overgrown trail was the camp; a few moldy huts near the remains of a sugar plantation. It was choked with lianas and all the huts but one had been smashed by feeding elephants. The Bulus dreaded the place for they feared that all deserted huts kept the spirits of their former owners.

"It is the place of dead people," muttered the Bulu.

Mr. Leeds watched him brush the floor clear of scorpions and rubbish and set up the bed. He sat on it and stared steadily at his servant.

"Now hear me, Sala. You will go back to the village and tell the chief that I am dead."

"Dead?" The Bulu's bloodshot eyes popped. "Then the magic maker was right—"

"No, fool. I have told you that this is devil palaver. You will make drum talk that I am dead, and all men will come to mourn me."

"*Wah—*"

"Listen," Mr. Leeds whispered sharply. "This is magic palaver. I am not dead. The white man did not send me back to death. He has lied. So I feign dèath to prove him a liar before the people. Savvy? You will run into the village crying out and saying I am dead. When they ask where I am, you will say that I ran into the river and died there. Then, when it is night you will come to me here."

"Aye, *n'tangan.*"

"Do not fear," Mr. Leeds said gently. "No harm will catch you."

But he sat there with some unease as Sala ran swiftly out of the sinister hollow among the trees.

Darkness had fallen when he heard the thud of drums.

"He walks without sound," they rumbled. "His hands are folded on his breast."

Then distant drums fluttering far away.

Mr. Leeds cursed his luck; he dared not have a light, some prowling native might spy it through the trees. So he fidgeted in pitch blackness waiting for Sala. Once there was a rustling near the trail and Mr. Leeds went toward it. But there was a startled bark and a crashing through the bush as a gorilla retreated. Mr. Leeds, swallowing a brassy taste in his mouth, ducked back to the hut.

Then he heard the clear whistle of a parrot. He stepped cautiously out, answering it.

"*N'tangan?*" came a tremulous whisper.

"Aye, come Sala."

The Bulu crept fearfully toward him.

"The people of Ekin weep and the women prepare for the death dance," he reported. "Drums are talking up and down the river and many chiefs will come to this place."

"Good. Go back now and make mourning. But speak to no man of me. In a little while I will come to you."

"Aye, *n'tangan.*"

Mr. Leeds lay down and slept.

All night the bass rumble of drums echoed through the forest. The little man alone in the deserted camp shivered with cold, awakened many times to listen to the crash of beasts. Toward morning a

cold rain soaked him and he crept from the hut and forced his way through dense thorn to the river bank. There he made himself comfortable on the roots of a mangrove, bit off a chew of tobacco —he dared not smoke—and settled himself to watch.

It was not long before he heard the rhythmic *thuck-thuck* of paddles and the long, red dugout slid upstream. Amidships was Julian Spencer dressed in glittering white clothes. It looked like a uniform. Certainly the right costume for a magic man, the threadbare Mr. Leeds reflected.

THAT night, just after dark when sound carries best, the call drum of Ekin throbbed like a heart, its sinister rhythm booming through the steamy air.

"He walks without sound," it said. "He is dead. Witchcraft will kill at night, a greater god, has come to the Bulus. Let all men come to the town of Ekin."

The message was repeated at intervals.

So Spencer wanted all the Bulus to see him take over. Mr. Leeds grinned wolfishly.

"Go 'rahnd the bleeder like a cooper 'rahnd a cawsk." he promised himself.

During the day he watched canoes running up-river and figured eight days to bring all the eastern people in to Ekin. One night he crept through the bush to the edge of his compound. It was thronged with natives squatting about blazing fires. Drums tapped out dance rhythms and little girls, naked but for the coronet-shaped headdresses of cowries, capered before the flames.

And on the veranda the obese Spencer watched it all.

On the eighth day the drums banged out a new message.

"This night, witchcraft will kill. The great one will make magic for the Bulu people. He will tell them of their duty. Let all men come to hear."

Mr. Leeds was lying off the path behind his house. Firelight played on the trees and crowds of awed natives trotted from Ekin to the compound.

A mighty fire blazed in its center and beyond it squatted hundreds of men, their spears glinting beside them. They wore feather headdresses and tappa cloths. Beyond them was blackness and outlined against the river were little girls dancing and clapping their thin hands.

The veranda of the house was screened with a white cloth and before it, on the ground, were two round tables also covered with white. There were sounds inside the house, and the harsh whisper of Spencer.

There was a sudden clang of a gong. Not the dull bong of wood but the resonant crash of metal.

The curtain opened and from it pranced two figures hooded and covered with white sheets on which were daubed weird designs in red. Their feet were shod in white and they wore white gloves.

The chiefs crouched low, eyes glittering in the fire as the two fearsome figures solemnly prancing circled the fire. Then they approached the tables, took something from them and approached the fire. Suddenly they screamed loudly raising their tossing arms.

The mounting scarlet flames turned green.

"*Wah! È ké!*" howled the natives, bowing their heads between their knees.

Their eyes gleamed fiendishly in the grisly flare; the huts and trees were outlined in garish light.

"Bengal Fire," snorted Mr. Leeds and crawled close to the back of his hut.

Peering through a crack in the back door he could see an enormous figure outlined against the firelit sheet. Spencer was busy with something but Mr. Leeds could not see what it was. Then Spencer banged on a gong and the fire turned purple, then red again. Acrid smoke billowed over the clearing and Mr. Leeds could hear the superstitious moans of the natives.

Suddenly there was silence and Spencer stepped through the cotton cloth.

Stealthily Mr. Leeds pressed open the door and ducked inside. The room and veranda were cluttered with open boxes and on the veranda was the gong, its club and several mechanical tricks.

"Tuppenny-'apenny magic outfit!" he snorted, peering through the curtain.

Between the tables over which the two sheeted assistants crouched posed Julian Spencer.

His height was exaggerated by a high peaked cap, a white tunic covered with decorations strained over his mighty shoulders; he wore white breeches and black, polished top boots.

And on his left arm was a swastika!

"So!... You fat 'ound!" gasped Mr. Leeds. "A bloody Nazi!"

卐 NOW he understood. No wonder the big man's English was so precise. Trade? He didn't want that; he'd come for some far more sinister purpose. Mr. Leeds looked about desperately. Something had to be done quick. At last his eyes fell on the club. He grabbed it.

"Now, you fat popinjay," he breathed. "Jus' come in 'ere. Jus' come in for a minute. I'll bash yer bleedin' 'ead in."

Before the fire Spencer strutted grandly while the natives watched him in awed silence. Then he raised his arms in a commanding gesture.

"Before I came," he began, "there was a man; a small, withered old man, bearded like a monkey; a foolish but wicked old man. He came among you with lies; he used you as fools to do his bidding."

"All right, all right!" breathed Mr. Leeds. "I'll get me turn." He searched among the articles laid out in the semi-darkness.

There were cylinders of pasteboard, trick blocks, metal rings and a crystal carafe which Mr. Leeds sniffed. It contained kerosene.

"The old fire-eatin' gag." Mr. Leeds' big nose twitched with contempt. "I'll wreck that 'un." He searched for a water-bottle, poured out half the kerosene and filled the bottle with water. "That'll stop yer bleedin' gallop."

"The monkey man," continued the harsh voice outside, "has tried to ruin the Bulu people. They were warriors. He has told you you must no longer fight. He has told you you must work like women or slaves so that he may take your produce, paying you only rubbish in return. He is robbing you and has done so for many years." He waited while the chief muttered uneasily.

"Now he is dead," he roared. "And the Bulus are free."

"*Wah!*"

"I have come among you to show the way to freedom, so that the whole of this country will talk of the Bulu warriors again; so that other tribes will tremble when they hear the drums of the Bulus."

Above the heads of the chiefs glittering points lifted as the fire caught spear heads. Mr. Leeds slid out of the house, crawled through the trees surrounding the compound and took a place where he could watch.

"I will show you my magic, so that you will believe," bellowed Spencer.

As he spoke one of the assistants danced to the hut and entered.

The natives yelled as the other assistant dragged a terrified old chief to the white man.

"See!" howled Spencer, snatching an egg from the old man's ear.

"Yer gotta do more'n that, chum," Mr. Leeds whispered.

Then Spencer palmed glittering coins which he threw across the fire. The

natives barked their exclamations but did not touch the magic counters.

"I will bring you presents from the air," screamed Spencer, red of face and streaming with sweat.

He snatched from the returned assistant a card cylinder, turned it this way and that to show the natives it was empty, then began to drag silk kerchiefs from his sleeve through the cylinder. Dozens of them came out and the natives howled their astonishment.

"See? They are presents!" shouted Spencer. "You shall have them. You shall have many fine things soon."

Some of the natives stretched timid fingers toward the gaudy scraps.

Mr. Leeds was searching the crouching mob of Bulus. In the rear many were in shadow but the flames brought out faces that he recognized. Then he saw Sala standing beside a tree on the far side of the compound.

Stealthily Mr. Leeds backed into the bush and crawled swiftly toward the river. Creeping along the bank he reached the other side without being heard by the engrossed natives.

"Ain't called 'silent walker' for nothink," he panted, stepping delicately through the undergrowth towards Sala.

HE REACHED a large, wide-rooted cottonwood a few yards in from the clearing. He could make out Sala's bullet head against the garish firelight. Pursing his lips he emitted a thin parrot whistle. Sala started, and looked around. Spencer was mouthing gibberish as he tossed bright rings in the air and caught them.

"Mike his bloomin' forchun in vaudeville," sneered Mr. Leeds. Then he whistled again.

Sala backed away from the clearing and moved to him.

"*N'tangan?*"

"Aye. Hear me."

"Aye, *n'tangan.*"

"This is a bad man."

"Aye, *n'tangan.* He seeks to work a mischief with the people."

"Then hear me. I shall go from you. But you must watch the white cloth that hangs before my veranda. Savvy?"

Sala nodded.

"I shall make a sign. It will be that the cloth moves as though in the wind. When you see that sign you will . . ." His voice dropped to the thinnest whisper.

"Aye, *n'tangan.*"

He watched Sala go back to his place. Then he crawled through the tangle of vines and bushes to the back of the compound. As he watched he saw an assistant carry the carafe of watered kerosene to one of the little tables between which Spencer was performing more tricks.

"Hear me, Bulus," he shouted. "I am keeping the greatest magic of all for the last. First I shall tell how you may be warriors again. How you may again be the great people of Africa."

The chiefs stirred, some shook their spears. Mr. Leeds noted they were mostly the up-river chiefs.

"You shall go back to your towns and talk to your young men. Tell them they are fighters. Why do they sit along the river like fisheaters? They must go north, burning and destroying the rich tribes there. They will take women and slaves. They will be rich with much trade goods. For I shall have the mantle of my protection over them."

"But the white men, the Franchi from Yaunde?" quavered an old chief tremulously.

"Are ye women?" roared Spencer. "When ye go fighting and burning among the tribes they will follow and fight too. They will go with you and destroy all who resist! Then when the Franchi come you can drive them too, for they are not many. You can drive them into the sea! With my magic I will give you strength! Drive them, kill them! And the Bulus will be again the great people of Africa. Only when the Franchi are driven from this country will the Bulus have what is theirs. There will be no tax, no trade, no laws except the laws of the mighty Bulus."

Some of the chiefs were on their feet shuffling in the war dance and shaking their spears.

"But, lord—" called one white-headed man. "'He who walks without sound' has said we must not fight, we must not take women from other tribes. He has

"He is dead!" bellowed Spencer, waving his arms. "He is nothing!"

said that someone will hang because we gave sass wood to a man of Ombin."

"He is dead!" bellowed Spencer, waving his arms. "He is nothing. He has done harm to the Bulus, so I have killed him. You have seen my magic. With my magic I killed him, for he was the enemy of Bulus."

Mr. Leeds shook the white cloth before the veranda so that it rippled as though blown by a wind.

"Where is the dead man, 'He who walks without sound'?" came Sala's voice.

There was a silence, then a low murmur. Peeping through the curtain Mr. Leeds could see the natives looking at each other while Spencer stared about him.

"With my magic I killed the monkey-man!" yelled Spencer.

Mr. Leeds shook the curtain again.

"Where is the body? Where is the dead man?" intoned Sala.

And there were other voices, timid and low who echoed the call: "Where is the dead man?"

"I have slain him! Who speaks? Let him come forward and I will show him my magic," shouted Spencer in a strangling voice.

"Where is the dead man? Where is 'He who walks without sound'?"

Many were calling now and Spencer glared at his assistants, whispering to them.

"Where is the dead man?"

All were calling now, and the question seemed like a deep throated chant: "Where is the dead man?"

"I will tell you. Silence, you dogs. I will tell you. Hear me. I will show my strongest magic of all. You shall see how I blasted him to nothing."

SPENCER was stuffing tow into his mouth, gesturing with his free hand. Mr. Leeds could see his face shining with sweat. But the natives were moving restlessly now, yelling their call, shouting to each other.

Mr. Leeds chuckled with glee. They were getting out of hand.

"Just a minute, me beauty," he whispered. "Just a minute."

"Silence! Wait and look!" bellowed Spencer, his voice muffled by the tow. "You shall see my magic! You shall see me drink water! But I will spit fire, magic fire, magic fire that will kill any man who does not believe. I will spit my magic fire, the fire that killed the monkey man, 'He who walks without sound.' See, and fear."

With a grand gesture he picked up the carafe and poured its contents into his mouth. Then he stooped to the fire and dragged a flaming branch from it. He held the branch before his mouth and blew the mixture of kerosene and water.

The flame went out!

There was an awful hush.

Frantically Spencer reached for another blazing bunch of leaves. Again the flame was doused.

From the back of the crowd came a nervous giggle.

Furious, Spencer spat the wad of tow from his mouth. The giggle was growing. Some of the Bulus were laughing aloud.

"Silence, fools!" he screamed. "There was no fire because the gods do not will it. But hear me. I will tell you of a stronger magic."

"Yeah, Bulus," came a sneering voice from behind the curtain. "You have seen magic. You have seen tricks such as are played by children with quick hands."

He shook the curtain.

"Where is the dead man?" shouted Sala, and again the cry was taken up by the chiefs.

Spencer was whirling like a dervish, waving his arms and shouting.

"Where is the fire that the great magic maker did spit?" sneered Mr. Leeds from behind the curtain.

"Where is the dead man?" roared the chiefs.

"Laugh, Bulus, laugh!" called Mr. Leeds. "Laugh, for the great magic maker is a foolish liar. Let him show the magic fire! Let him show the dead man!"

"*Schweinen!*" screamed Spencer. "I have destroyed him with my fire!"

"Laugh, Bulus!"

Spencer wheeled like a boxer, dashed at the veranda and slashed the curtain from the posts.

"*Wah!*" shouted the chiefs. "The walker without sound! The dead man! Nay, he is not dead!"

They bounded forward staring, screeching.

"Aye, Bulus," Mr. Leeds called. "Here is the dead man who is not dead. And there is the magic maker who cannot make magic. Laugh, Bulus, laugh!"

Spencer crouched like a madman, plucking at the tight collar of his tunic, wet mouth drooling, eyes bloodshot.

"Get away," he babbled. "You are dead. Get out, fool, your man saw you dead in the river."

The chiefs crowded near, roaring with laughter. Sala in the front capered like a madman, arms waving, teeth shining in the dying firelight.

MR. LEEDS stood, in tattered shorts, worn bush shirt, helmet tilted at a dashing angle over his thin bearded face. But his eyes sparkled as he glanced at the obese figure slumped at his feet.

"Better beat it, Fritzie," he advised. "When they stop laughin' them Bulus is goin' ter be a bit narsty with yer. They don't like bein' fooled, savvy?"

"Damn you! Damn you, *schwein! Englischer hund!* Kill me!" He dragged open the tunic, exposing pallid hairy chest. "Kill me, *schwein.* I dare you."

The laughter was dying now and some of the chiefs were muttering, a muttering that grew to an ugly growl.

"He has lied. He has tried to kill our father and mother, 'The walker without sound.' He has lied."

Then there was a clash of spears from the rear. "Kill! Kill!"

The voices were rising on a bloodcurdling wail that was the ancient Bulu war scream.

Spencer covered his face with fat, redhaired hands.

"Kill me," he whimpered. "Kill me."

"Too blarsted good for yer," Mr. Leeds said, stepping over him. He faced the shouting mob.

"Listen Bulus, children. Have I not told you that it is a bad thing to kill? Have I not said it is better to laugh? This man is a sick man who thought he was a god. But that is no cause to kill him. He shall go whence he came, down the river in his long canoe. And no man shall harm him."

"Aye, no man shall harm him," echoed Sala, brandishing his spear.

"Better let all men laugh at his symbol of magic," shouted Mr. Leeds. He bent and swiftly snatched the swastika armband from Spencer's sleeve. "This, the hooked cross, is his magic. But it cannot harm the Bulus. Laugh, Bulus! Laugh at the hooked cross."

Sala's mighty baritone led the chorus and the chiefs followed. They rolled on the ground, kicking, slapping at each other, holding their sides, choking in the red dust, faces convulsed in laughter that was half hysteria.

"Nah, Fritzie, come along," said Mr. Leeds from the corner of his mouth.

The German shambled to his feet, staring dully at the laughing natives.

"What will you do?"

"Do? Ter you? Nothin', yer poor benighted fool. Come along, foller me."

Mr. Leeds swaggered through the laughing mob to the river bank.

"Git in that canoe, Fritzie, an' paddle fer yer life. I ain't sure 'ow long I kin 'old 'em. Go tell yer little paper 'anger we don't need no paintin' terday."

He watched the gross figure shove off with a paddle and wield it clumsily until the current carried him down-river. The last thing he heard were shrill, choking sobs from the shapeless heap in the stern.

"Chiefs," he shouted when he could make himself heard. "Go back to your towns and tell your people to laugh, and work. Tell them the old magic of work and laughter is stronger than that of war and killing. Look well at this!" He held up the swastika armband. "This is no longer a symbol of magic. It is the symbol of laughter. When any man shall see this, for others may bring it, let that man and all his brothers laugh.

"Make drum talk up and down the river so that all may know the old magic lives, the magic of laughter and work."

He stood on his veranda as they filed past, saluting, then turned into his hut.

He sat down wearily, looking at the tawdry apparatus left by Spencer.

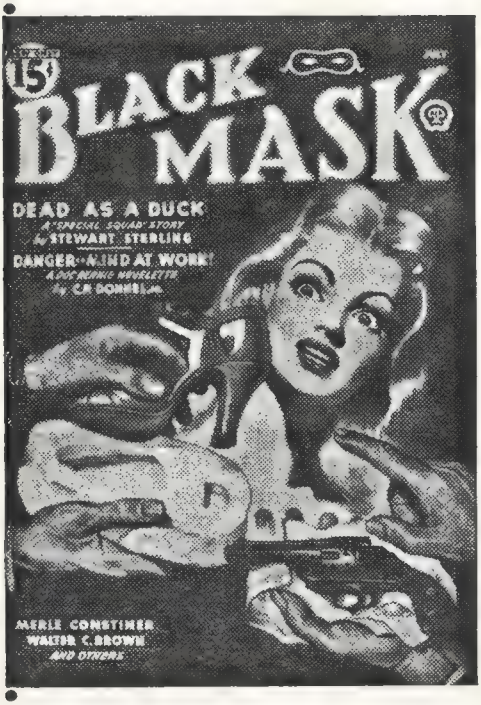
"Mighty dry work, this 'ere magic," he said, and reached for his gin bottle.

LATER, when he reported the matter to Hope, the American missionary, on his next visit, the latter was shocked.

"Why did you let him go, Charlie?" he demanded. "That was a dangerous spy—you should have sent him to Yaunde."

"Nah," scoffed Mr. Leeds. "He's better off where 'e is. Why, every time I scratches a swastika in the sand with me boot toe, the Bulus goes into 'ysterics. If they ever sends another Nazi 'ere, they'll laugh theirselves sick. No, the Germans'll never get nowhere along this 'ere river, the dirty bahstids."

"Ahem, of course not," agreed the missionary.



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SEW-SEW WOMAN

By REESE WOLFE

ILLUSTRATED BY L. STERNE STEVENS

"This is an outrage!" he roared. "The American consul will hear of this!"

WHEN Pearl Harbor happened, the Old Man—Captain Blanton of the *Banda Maiden*—picked up two kinds of trouble. Personal trouble, I mean. The first was some of that Jap funny-money that had been planted in half the Jap-owned beer-joints in town to pass off as U. S. currency in anticipation of taking over the place, and the other was Oscar.

Oscar, of course, wasn't the kind to cause anybody trouble if he could help

it. Some people are just born to trouble, that's all. Big, coffee-skinned, blue-eyed, half Hawaiian half Swede, so he said, I'd signed him on at the dockside on a pier-head jump when my second engineer went to the hospital with a piece of boiler valve in his neck. All he wanted from life, he told me, was a chance to use his engineer's ticket, and be left in peace. But it was just those two things Captain Blanton made the mistake of trying to keep him from having. Those two things and the mistake of stuffing his pockets with fake Jap dollar bills when they raided Joe Usaki's beer parlor that day at Pearl Harbor.

Captain Blanton might have got away with it, too, but he didn't figure on the girl in the case.

The day the girl came aboard us we were easing into the Old Roadstead at the far end of Batavia Bay, stirring up mud with every turn of our wheel. I'd come up from the engines for a blow, and was standing in the after well with Oscar and some of the others waiting for the doctor to clear us. Nobody was thinking much about the war; the Japs still seemed a long, long way from Java in those early weeks, and I remember thinking how the westerly monsoon had scoured the sky like a holystone so that when you looked over the tall palms on the coral patch islands dotting the bay, it was as if the sun-baked marshes along shore were a kind of sparkling hem for the jungle skirt beyond. And beyond the shore, beyond the city itself, where the jungle sloped up like bosoms clear and sharp, Mount Pangerango and Mount Salak loomed. Japs or no, it's the way I like to think of Batavia now.

It was the hot season and the sun had blasted the roadstead clean of the usual crowd of sampans and bumboats so that when a fair-sized dhow tacked in toward us we all noticed the craft right away, even before we noticed the girl. It had a narrow hull, clean as a whistle, and two yellow sails set upside down the way the old-timers still do it, and at the tiller was an old *orang kaya,* a chief, wearing the little white cap of one who has been to Mecca.

As the dhow ranged close aboard, Oscar gave a low whistle.

"She's a mighty trim craft," I agreed.

He looked around, grinning. "Chief, that's a sure sign you're getting old," he said. "Take another look!"

I SAW what he meant, then. She was leaning against the dhow's foremast, one leg tucked under her, and her batik, sarong-fashion and stained with red and green scrimshaw patterns like you see in any Chink bazaar from Lombok to Java Head, looked like something special just by the way she wore it. She had an air about her. Or maybe it was her ebony hair with a tjempaka flower in it that made the difference, the way it contrasted with her coffee-with-plenty-of-cream skin. She eyed us calmly, not only Oscar and me but the whole dirty little tramp ship from truck to load line, and then suddenly, as if the sight was too much to bear, she twisted around and disappeared down in the bottom of the boat.

Oscar whistled again, loud this time, and hailed the old chief at the tiller. "Ahoy there! Sew-sew woman—can do?"

The chief grinned up at us and bobbed his head. Soon the girl reappeared with a woven palm leaf basket on her arm filled with little bundles of patches to match or mend anything from dungarees to a hole in a suit of shore-going whites, and in her free hand she carried a rolled-up umbrella.

"Sew-sew!" Oscar shouted, pointing to himself and back to her. "Hurry up chop-chop!"

She nodded and as the dhow touched lightly alongside she swung over our bulwark as easily as a jungle cat.

Oscar took my arm. "Mr. Haslett," he said, avoiding my glance, "could you let me have a little change? Say a dollar? Cap'n Blanton's sure to pay me here, and I'll square everything then."

"Is that what he said?"

"No, not exactly. But—well—" He bit his lip and under the inquiring bird-like glance of the girl his neck grew red.

I took pity on him. "All right," I said. I gave him two dollars. It was all I could afford to give away, and I knew I'd never see it again. I'd seen men on the *Banda Maiden* with more pay than

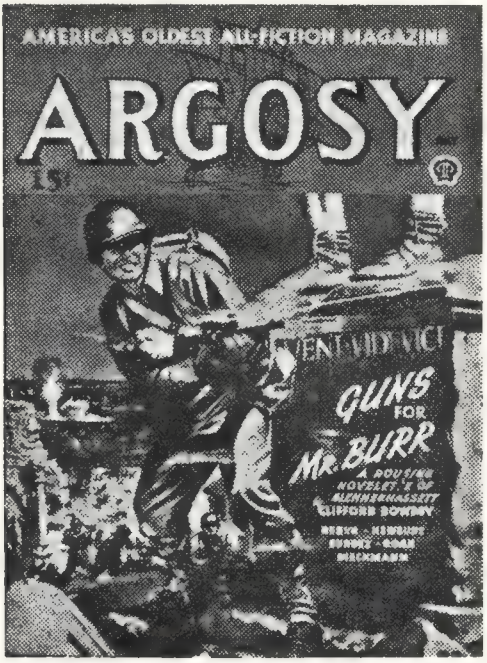
Oscar had coming, jump the ship with empty pockets, and glad to be clear of her. Oscar just happened to be one of that kind you run into now and then who have more faith in people in general, and in their skipper in particular, than nature intended they should.

He couldn't believe, for example, that Captain Blanton had insisted I put him to work chipping paint over the engine tops in a temperature pushing a hundred and thirty-five degrees while we were crossing the Line, with the deliberate aim of driving him off the ship. It was the Old Man's revenge for having to pay an extra engineer after figuring on getting along with one less when we dropped our Second at Pearl Harbor. But it was revenge with a practical side to it, as you might expect, because the cost of Oscar's pay and food were sizable items for a skipper like Blanton who shared profits with the owners. So he'd ridden and hounded him in a dozen vicious ways from the day he came aboard, finally even holding up his pay with one lame excuse after another from port to port, all the way south.

Oscar must have been reading my mind. "I'll get it here—sure," he said, and gave my arm a reassuring squeeze.

I watched him lead the girl aft toward the shade and semi-privacy of the fantail, and I tried to think what it was that made her so different from the others. She was prettier of course, but she was certainly no ordinary sew-sew.

AFTER dinner, tied up at the dock, I went aft for a better look-see. As soon as I poked my head over the ladder top, though, I wondered how I could have missed it. The girl's eyes were blue. Wide, round, Dutch-blue eyes as blue as Oscar's. And while I stood there staring a little, I guess, her level gaze went over me so steadily and coolly that I began to feel like the nosey old man I was. She sat cross-legged on a square of carpet in the shade of her umbrella, and her needle never stopped working while she watched me. Oscar, squatting



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on a little collapsible barber's stool in the shade, broke the trance.

"Ah there, Mr. Haslett—" he rolled his eyes toward me while the barber steadied his head—"need a hair cut?"

I didn't want a haircut, but it seemed like the only thing to do now that I was there. "I'll wait," I said.

"This is Tinia," he said, and added, as dignified as if he were introducing the owner's wife, "Tinia, this is Mr. Haslett, our chief engineer."

She gave me a quick smile, never missing a stitch with her needle, and I leaned on the rail to wait. Presently the barber withdrew the towel from Oscar's neck with a flourish and bowed so low that his *ikat* missed falling only because of the skillful way it was wound around his skull. "Finish, *tuan*." Oscar paid him and the barber fished change from inside his dirty Japanese shirt. "Here, what you got there?" said Oscar, reaching for a dollar bill the other held.

The barber looked at the girl, questioning. She took the bill and scrutinized it. Even where I stood the off-color and cheap printing were obvious.

"Where'd you get it?" Oscar demanded sharply.

Tinia stood up. "Kapitan give him, for haircut."

Oscar frowned. "It's fake," he said. "It's some of that Jap funny-money. Look here," he growled, taking the barber's shoulders in his big hands, "are you sure Cap'n Blanton gave you that?"

"Ja! Ja!" The little man rapped his knuckles on his ikat, jabbering Dutch and half the idioms of the port. "Kapitan give!"

Oscar glanced at me. "Did you hear that, mister? Why, the swag-bellied, penny-pinchin' double-crosser! Cap'n Blanton's no better than a counterfeiter. For two cents I'd—"

"Steady," I cautioned. "After all, you've only got this man's word for it. Before you do anything you'll be sorry for, I'd suggest you make sure if—"

"Do anything! He ought to be thrown in jail!" He turned, looking for the girl, and strode to the shoreside rail. "Look," he said, pointing.

Down on the dock Tinia was running toward two large Dutch policemen. She'd slipped away unnoticed, taking the Jap-printed bill with her, and coming up to them she spoke rapidly, making passionate gestures with the spurious money. The policemen nodded, glanced up at us, and hitching their belts, followed her up the gangway and around to the captain's quarters.

"If you don't mind another suggestion," I said, "it might be a good idea for you to get out of sight for awhile. After all, it's none of your affair."

He nodded gloomily and blew out his cheeks. "I suppose so. But I'll tell you one thing, mister. That girl has fire. Fire, and a big heart. She's the only one of us with courage enough to tackle the Old Man aboard his own ship!"

I was about to reply to this nonsense when Captain Blanton's voice rasped across from the main deck, "You—Mokua!" He was stripped to his singlet, and his beefy face behind a palm leaf fan which he whisked with angry jerks, was red as a storm signal. Behind him loomed the two policemen, and hovering in the background was the girl. "Bring that barber with you to my office! You too, Mr. Haslett. Jump!"

I cursed myself for a meddling old fool. The Jap bill was probably a put-up job of the barber's, I thought, with some childish idea of picking up extra change. I wondered how I was going to explain my ridiculous role in this mess.

IN THE captain's cabin the barber poured out a torrent of Javanese to the policemen in a sing-song, plaintive voice, pointing frequently at Captain Blanton. When he paused for breath Tinia took it up. Finally one of the policemen waved her aside.

"Dot man," he announced, eyeing the excited barber gravely, "says your money is no good, Kapitan." He shifted his gaze to Captain Blanton. "Und I t'ink it is for you to oxplain why is it a siduation like dis?"

Captain Blanton looked very hot in spite of the electric fan at his back. "Now hold on," he said. "Before we all lose our heads can't you understand this whole thing's a mistake? It all started as a joke—just a little joke of mine to

see what this man would do about it—about the joke money, I mean. These men—" he indicated Oscar and me—"can tell you I'm quite a practical joker. I never mean any harm by it, eh?" In the brief silence that met this last remark he made a harsh noise I knew from experience was meant to be a laugh. "My God can't anybody take a joke?"

The policeman coughed politely behind his hand. "Jap money like you give," he pointed out, "is no choke."

Captain Blanton eased down into his swivel chair like a deflating bag. "All right, all right," he muttered, reaching into his desk drawer, "I guess we can square things, eh?" He produced a wad of bills. "How would five dollars do?" The two Dutchmen drew themselves up stiffly, but the Old Man was too shrewd to be caught flat-footed like that—publicly, anyway. He turned smoothly to the barber. "Here you are, my man," he said, counting out five honest green dollar bills. He gave that brassy laugh of his again, and fumbled open the lid of a box of cigars. "Here, try these," he said to the Dutchmen. "Care for a drink?"

Each of them solemnly pocketed a handful of the skipper's best cigars and shook their heads. "No drink—t'ank you."

They turned to go and Oscar followed them to the door, but the captain's voice caught him in mid-stride. "Just a minute, Mr. Mokua!" He paused, giving the policemen time to clear out. Then in a flinty voice he demanded, "Are you responsible for this—this trick?"

Oscar's troubled glance wavered between the captain and the girl. It meant his job more than likely, and up to that moment at least, he still desperately wanted his job. But the girl stood straight as a fire bar, her blue eyes resting on him in a level, burning gaze, offering a challenge I'd have taken myself if I'd been ten years younger. "Yes, sir," he said, "if you call finding a counterfeit bill a trick."

Captain Blanton's face was purple as he flicked the girl a poisonous glance. "Did you bring this woman aboard?"

"Yes, sir. But she's not to blame. She simply saw her duty and she did it."

In the tense silence the fan on the bulkhead droned like a P-40. Suddenly Captain Blanton brought his fist down on the desk. "Duty!" he choked. "Get her out of here! Go on, all of you, get out! If I ever catch that Kanaka woman aboard my ship again I'll have her jailed!"

Oscar's lips went white. I don't know what he would have done, but I threw my arms around him, and the girl and I together half dragged him out the door.

I MIGHT have known Captain Blanton would never discharge Oscar. It would have meant paying him off in full as well as paying his passage back to his home port in Honolulu—two needless expenses from his point of view. So the trouble ended there—the Jap money trouble, that is—and it began to look as if the whole thing might blow over.

It might have, too, except for Oscar's chronic need of cash. We'd been in port a week discharging machinery and general cargo and taking on coffee, and I was in the alleyway under the bridge with the skipper figuring a way to leave clearance around the steam lines, when Oscar came looking for him. Oscar was rigged in his shore-going whites but I could see he was in anything but a holiday mood. He came straight to the point. "I'm going ashore, sir. I'd like to arrange for a little money."

"You would, eh?" The captain's voice was heavy with sarcasm. "I guess we'd all like to arrange for a little of that."

"This is important, sir. And anyhow I'm not asking for something that isn't legally mine. After all, I—"

"Oh, a sea lawyer," he cut in, his little eyes growing smaller. "Now see here, mister, I've put up with enough nonsense from you. If you don't like the way the pay's handled on this ship, why don't you clear out?"

"Because," said Oscar in a steady voice—too steady I thought—"I've got two hundred and sixty-eight dollars owing me to date, and I don't intend to lose it. Not that I expect all of it right now, but at least I want—"

"What you want," said Captain Blan-

ton, "and what you get are two different things." He spat on the deck and strode off down the alleyway. Oscar started to follow him but I grabbed his arm.

"Easy, son," I warned, wondering at the same time why I didn't let him go ahead and break every bone in the Old Man's body. "How much do you need?"

He gestured impatiently. "It isn't that so much. It's just that—" he hesitated. "Listen," he said. "I'm going to get married. I'm going to marry that girl—Tinia—see? I'm going to get her out of here!" The words came tumbling out as if he were afraid if he didn't say them all now he'd never say them, never have the courage to go through with it. "She's my kind, Mr. Haslett. Do you know what that means to me? Can you understand that? I love her, I love this country and the people here—" he waved his arm across the harbor—"but they're done for. Those Japs mean business!"

"I'm not saying I blame you," I began, "but where'll you take her? How in the name of common sense—"

He waved me down. "Darwin, Brisbane, Melbourne—anywhere on down south. There's no use trying to talk me out of this. My mind's made up. There's just one way you can help me—if you want to. It's about money, but not the way you think. You see," he went on more calmly, "this uncle of hers lives up a little beyond Batavia. He's the old boy you saw in the dhow, and he says I've got to have some money to get started on. Sort of a guarantee, like, to show good faith, I guess. I told him the pay I've got would be plenty once I change it into guilders at the bank, but I've got to show him I've got a stake, that I'm responsible, understand?"

"Frankly, I don't think I do."

"What I want you to do is simply explain that to him. Come up there with me now, today, and tell him just how it is. That I've got plenty of money owing me, but it may take a little time to get it by maybe settling with Cap'n Blanton for a little less, depending on what he'll give me before he sails. After all, he owes me two hundred and sixty-eight dollars. . . Will you do that? Today?"

I felt sorry for Oscar. *Two hundred and sixty-eight dollars, and he'd settle for a little less than that before we sailed!* I wanted to laugh, I wanted to explain things to him so he'd understand just who and what it was he was up against. But a look at his face changed my mind. He was beyond explanations, and anyhow, I reflected, the important thing now is to get him off the ship for his own good. "All right," I said, surprised at my own decision. "I'll go. But I doubt very much that it'll do you any good. That uncle sounds smart."

He fumbled for my hand and gripped it like a towing bridle. "I'm not forgetting this," he said hoarsely, "—ever!"

IT WAS late afternoon before I was able to get away, and when the tired car we hired for the trip labored up beyond Weltevreden, the banyan trees were already fingering the road with their long shadows. I could almost feel the coiled spring inside of Oscar beginning to unwind. He lolled back in the seat and stretched out his legs, watching the orchids and gigantic tree ferns parade by. The terraced hills and sawahs with their lush crops; the padi fields and the women up to their breasts in the green water of the canals washing linen; the pearl gray bullocks with noses and ears of black velvet—all this must have made the sea and the ship he was leaving behind seem like a world well lost.

Our car shuddered to a halt at a kampong gate, and I noticed with surprise the relics of totems over the straw and bamboo buildings that gave a hint of the ancient and lasting quality of the place. Oscar climbed out grinning at me, and his heart was in his eyes, full of the slender dark-haired girl he'd come to claim. "Everything's going to work out O. K.," he assured me.

"I hope so."

"It has to!"

Tinia met us at the gate. "Oska-ar," she called him, coming down heavily on the last part of it. "Oska-ar," she said, smiling, "I am glad you brought your friend. Everything is ready." There was a caress in the way she said it, and Oscar had to nudge me to get me back

to earth. "Mr. Balatok," he was saying, "this is my friend, Mr. Haslett."

The old gentleman's eyes twinkled but his only reply was to send a ruby jet of betel nut juice across the garden path. Then he pumped my hand, and dismissing the girl with a nod, led the way into the house. There were no women in sight, even Tinia had disappeared, and without a word he took us in to the table where half a dozen guests, all men, were already seated. We took chairs on each side of Mr. Balatok at the head of the long, narrow table, and the women appeared carrying big trays of prawns, bamboo shoots, chicken eggs, seaweed, and all kinds of fish to be mixed into a mound of rice on each plate in one magnificent mess. Nobody spoke. At last, toward the end of the meal, Mr. Balatok, who had so far given no hint he could speak in any language, looked up and eyed me across the remains of his dinner.

"You stay long?"

"Not long," I answered. "We sail tomorrow."

He digested this in silence while handing around pale brown cheroots. When his own was glowing he glanced at Oscar. "In morning we go bank, yes?"

"You bet," Oscar agreed quickly, "but first there's something I've got to explain to you, Mr. Balatok." He gulped some coffee. "You see, I won't have all the money by tomorrow. I couldn't hardly expect to get it all right away, of course. I guess you can see how it is."

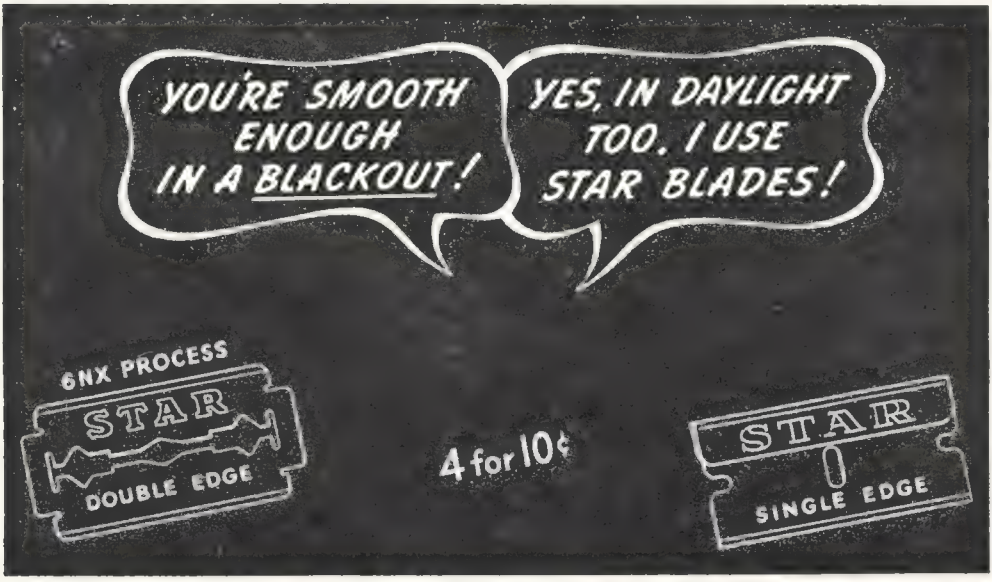
Mr. Balatok removed the cheroot from his lips. "No money," he repeated slowly. It wasn't a question, it was a statement of fact, as if he'd known all along that was how it was going to be.

"I can get part of it tomorrow—I know I can," Oscar protested in a strained voice. "But not all of it. A hundred guilders. Maybe a hundred and fifty. How would that be, if I get the rest later?" He threw me a pleading glance and I cleared my throat.

"You see," I explained, "the captain keeps part of each man's pay until he gets back to his home port. Mr. Mokua, here, has two hundred and sixty-eight dollars due him, but of course he won't be paid off in full until he gets back to Honolulu."

"Ho-no-lu-lu?" The old man said it as if it were in another world. He took a long pull at his cheroot and studied Oscar narrowly through the smoke.

"No, no, not Honolulu," said Oscar, throwing down his napkin. "I'm quitting right here and taking whatever pay I can get. I've always made a living, Mr. Balatok. Tinia and I can always get along wherever we are. After all, I'm a licensed engineer, you know."



MR. BALATOK ground out the ash of his cheroot on his plate and rose from the table. He bowed to me without actually looking at me, and stalked from the room. One by one the others at the table followed. Behind some beaded curtains female voices rose sharply once or twice, and finally when there was a muffled sob Oscar jumped to his feet, kicking back his chair.

"Better stand by," I cautioned him. "It'll only make matters worse if you go busting in there."

"He doesn't understand," he muttered, gripping the edge of the table. "He thinks I'm a fake, that I can't—" his voice trailed off as Mr. Balatok reappeared looking very tired. He went over and stood by the outside door. "Good-bye," he said.

Oscar hurried over to him. "You can't do this! Where's Tinia? Must see her!"

The old man shook his head. "Maybe you come back some time—from Ho-no-lu-lu."

"I tell you I'm through—I'm not going back to Honolulu!"

"Come on," I urged, "there's no use arguing about it now. We'll get a drink at the hotel and think things over."

"Can't you see how it is, Mr. Balatok?" Oscar persisted. "I'll get part of the money. All we need is passage money anyhow. I'm young. I'll work . . ." He stopped, finally, under the other's cold stare, and turning abruptly he strode out of the house and headed for the kampong gate.

The stars hung in the sky like drops of fire, and the humid perfumed air folded around us like a winding sheet as I hurried to catch up. It was a long walk to the hotel, and in the bar we sprawled at a table under a languid fan that scarcely stirred enough air to brush the scarlet dragon flies off their beat around the room. When the boy brought oru stenghas I paid for them and Oscar sat up, staring at my open wallet.

"Where'd you get that Jap funny-money?"

"Forgot all about it," I laughed. "Your barber friend turned it over to me after we left the captain's office."

"Let's have a look." He spread the counterfeit dollar bill on the table and rubbed his chin thoughtfully. Suddenly he looked up. "Boy!"

"*Saja, tuan?*"

"Bring me an envelope!"

Oscar stuffed the bill in the envelope, sealed it, and wrote Tinia's name on it. "Here, boy," he said. "Savvee Balatok? The house of Balatok on Panjang Road?

"The house is well known, *Tuan.*"

"Take this to the girl Tinia. See, it's written here. Don't give it to anybody else. Tell her that Oscar Mokua sends this. *Oscar Mokua,*" he repeated. "Understand?" He piled all my change from the drinks on the envelope and pushed it toward the boy. "Now, *pigi!*"

I watched the boy run down the verandah steps and disappear in the dark street. "What's the idea," I demanded testily, "haven't you enough to worry about already?"

Oscar grinned over the top of his glass. "Chief," he said slowly, "unless I miss my guess my worries are over. I've got a hunch that Jap funny-money's worth your weight in gold."

SAILING DAY—or night, since it was close to midnight when we cast off our lines—was a black one for Oscar. He'd been expecting some kind of word from the girl, and as we stood out from the harbor I made it a point to keep my eyes busy at the log board when he went above for a last look shoreward. We were well out in the stream when the bridge unaccountably rang down the engines, and after whistling topside and failing to get a sensible reply from the mate, I went up myself.

As I stepped on deck I heard Captain Blanton bellowing like a bull, and I was just in time to see him hoisting his overstuffed frame down the pilot ladder into a launch with the insignia of the harbor police on its stack.

"This is an outrage!" he roared. "The American consul will hear of this! Ridiculous! Two hundred dollars it'll cost me to lay over in port past midnight! I warn you. . . ." The launch's motor drowned out his voice, and the arms of his white uniform flailed the air as they were swallowed up in the gloom.

I went aft looking for Oscar. Not finding him, I settled down for a pipe on the forehatch, waiting for the captain's return. It was a long wait. At last, toward three bells, the exhaust of the returning launch floated over the water, and soon the skipper was bouncing over the ladder top. "Ring her full ahead!" he bawled up at the wheel house. "What you waiting for up there, can't you see I'm aboard?"

I rose to hurry below.

"You—Haslett! Send that second engineer up to see me right away!"

"Yes sir. Was there some difficulty ashore?"

"Difficulty!" he yelped, twisting around half way up the bridge ladder. "D'you think I went ashore for the boat ride, you blasted idiot? It was that Kanaka woman again. Got hold of some of that Jap money somewhere and faked up another charge against me. Claimed I passed it off on some relative of hers last night. She had witnesses—and those Dutch cops again—everything to frame me!" He stamped onto the lower bridge.

"Did you straighten it out all right?"

"I bought her off, if that's what you mean!" he shouted down at me. "Cost me exactly two hundred and sixty-eight dollars to get her to drop the charges. Two hundred and sixty-eight dollars to that Kanaka, and two hundred more to those thieving Dutchmen in extra port charges for laying over past midnight!"

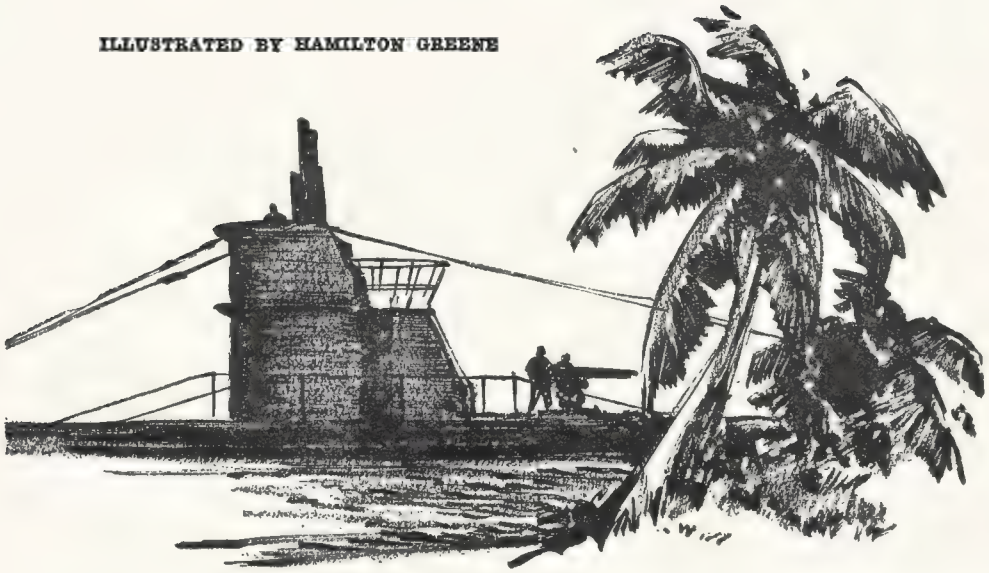
"Two hundred and sixty-eight—" I repeated, and nearly choked, thankful he couldn't see the expression on my face in the dark.

"I've got my own ideas about that! Send Mokua up right away!"

"Yes, sir," I answered, and stepped into the bridge alleyway. At the far end in the after deck I saw a familiar hulking figure stripped to the waist, climbing onto the bulwark. His shoes, looped by their laces around his neck, swung out as he leaned over the side and dropped quietly into the water.

I hesitated a moment, but the engine room telegraph clanged briskly, the whistle boomed a farewell salute, and I hurried below thinking of the girl with the Dutch-blue eyes who was waiting back yonder on the starlit shore.

ILLUSTRATED BY HAMILTON GREENE



AS SOON as I came up onto the porch of the fruit company club in Tela I spotted Steve Sundra's long body at ease in one of the comfortable wicker rockers that litter the place. I hadn't seen much of the big Minnesota Swede since the years we'd been together with the Marines in Nicaragua. When Washington lived up to its pledge, which was in reality the beginning of the good neighbor policy, and withdrew us from Nicaraguan soil, Steve had stayed on to accept a commission in the Guardia Nacional, and I went to work for one of the fruit companies. From then on our meetings had been few and far between.

Steve had evidently seen me coming up the walk for he was grinning from ear to ear as I went over to where he was sitting. We shook hands, exchanged genial personal maledictions, and I flopped down in the chair next to his.

That was when I first noticed the dog. He was lying on the floor with his bandaged head resting on his paws, and when I sat down he rolled his big sorrowful brown eyes from me to Steve as though to say: "I'm afraid you'll have to be the welcoming committee all by yourself, Boss. I don't feel up to it."

He was such a funny looking tyke I had to laugh as I asked, "Is he yours, Steve? And what in the world is the matter with him? Toothache?"

"No," said Steve reaching down to pat gently the graying chocolate snout. "Poor old Shamus lost an ear."

"How did it happen?" I asked, leaning forward to stroke his wiry back.

"We were hunting leopards with a radio directional beam."

I turned my head sidewise, my hand still resting on the dog, to see whether or not Steve was kidding. But he wasn't. His cold blue eyes were dead serious as he continued, addressing the terrier, "And what's more, we found 'em. Didn't we, Shamus?"

I forced a laugh as I remarked, "That's a new one on me."

"Oh, it's ingenious!" exclaimed Steve, softening his jaw muscles. "And if you have the equipment it's the most direct method I know of. Under the right conditions, and with a little unintentional help from the victim, you can almost be certain of a kill."

It was obvious that Steve was proud of himself and wanted to do a little dress-parading in front of somebody so I said, "Come on, give!"

He laughed, then became immediately serious again as he began the yarn.

AS YOU know I served a six-year hitch in the Guardia, after which I was retired to the reserve list with a captain's commission. In the meantime I

THE PIG-BOAT AND THE PUP

By
A. H. HOENNINGER

had married General Rojas' daughter and bought myself a coffee *finca* and cattle rancho outside Matagalpa. I was all set for life. No more trekking through the jungles in search of bandits, or anything else. I was content to stay up there in those cool hills and raise coffee for you birds down here on the coast to drink, and mules so you can haul your bananas. No more sweating for me.

Well, one day, after we were all in this war together, and the Nazis started sinking so many ships in the Caribbean, old General Rojas came to me with a proposition. He wanted me to go to Bluefields on the north coast and take charge of a schooner the government had fitted out with listening devices for the detection of subs.

I told him I had been a Marine, not a *marinero,* or sailor. Furthermore, I knew less than nothing about listening devices.

He said he knew that, but he wanted me to take charge. As for navigators and technicians, the United States government was furnishing them. My job was to use my knowledge of Spanish and the local people, and to give the work general supervision. It seems they figured these Axis rats had secret bases among the string of cays that runs from the border of Costa Rica north along the coast of Nicaragua to Cape Gracias á Dios, then around the Central American bulge and due west along the Honduran shore as far as Guatemala.

It didn't sound too interesting to me. I knew what it was like along that coast. It would be damn monotonous investigating each of those hundreds of tiny islands. Especially so in a sailing vessel that had no motor. With nothing but canvas we would be at the mercy of every change of weather, including dead calms. I could picture myself frying on a deck that almost burned through the soles of my shoes while the sails hung limply motionless and the sun scorched my eyeballs.

No, it wasn't for me so long as I could sit in the cool patio of my own ranch house and be comfortable. I told my father-in-law so, but the old general had two aces up his sleeve. He could have forced me to go because I was still on the reserve list, but he didn't need to. He won when he made me see it was my patriotic duty, not only to my newly adopted country, but to the land I had served as a Marine. So a week later I was in Bluefields.

El Sueno, The Dream, out of Puerto Cabezas, was no worse than I thought she'd be. She was no dream boat, but she was seaworthy. She was a typical trading schooner such as you find in the Caribbean trade. Nothing fancy, just fifty foot of good pine deck over a roomy hardwood hull. They hadn't dared put fancy fittings, or a new suit of sails on her for fear of making her look suspiciously like what she was—a vessel of the Nicaraguan navy. She remained obscure and unpretentious.

After I had inspected her, there was one thing that bothered me. What

would we do if we did discover a sub or secret base? Our heaviest fire-power was one machine gun. As soon as I asked what we would do, Lynch, the navigator, looked at the radio man and said, "Why Sir, Adamo here would report our findings, and we'd sail on."

Yes, that's what he said. We'd report our findings, and sail on! At first I wondered what kind of birds these men were the U. S. Navy had sent us. Were they babes in the wood, or didn't they care what happened to them?

LYNCH was a nice looking kid in his middle twenties. And when I looked at his red hair and freckled face I was thinking of what the tropical sun was going to do to that complexion. However, he was to prove that in spite of being so young he really knew his business when it came to handling sail. He had been an amateur skipper in civilian life, and the navy couldn't have picked a better man for the job.

The mate, Vito Adamo, was about the same age, but his complexion was as dark as the redhead's was fair. He had been a radio engineer before he joined the navy, and he cared for his instruments as though they were the most important things in the world. Which I suppose they were, as far as we were concerned.

The rest of the crew consisted of two Carib sailors, and my Irish terrior, Shamus. We weren't a very impressive group, I must confess.

Well, two days later we sailed out of Bluefields and began to beat our way north, picking up one little island after another. The weather was ideal. We were still in the middle of the dry season. If we hadn't been on a serious mission I would have enjoyed cruising in and out among the many tiny islets of the Perla Cays, the King Cays, and the Tyra Cays. All day, and all night, too, for the bright moon made it almost as light as day, we stayed on deck watching and listening. The Caribbean was at its best. The bright blue sea was as peaceful and friendly as your favorite lake, and we lazed along in front of a steady breeze that was just strong enough to keep our canvas full. The two Caribs were in their glory. Except when Lynch gave the orders to come about to approach an island either seaward or landward they didn't have to lay a hand on a rope for more than a week.

However, on the tenth night, two days after we had rounded Cape Gracias á Dios and were sailing through the Caratasca Cays in Honduran waters, we had on first incident. The night was fairly dark, for the moon was on the wane. The breeze was still steady though light, and we were barely making way when Adamo came from below to tell us he had picked up some sounds, but too faint to identify exactly.

"What do they sound like?" asked Lynch who was sitting beside the binacle teaching me how to keep a boat on her course.

"They sound as though they might be coming from a ship's screws, but they are still too far away for me to be certain."

Then Lynch turned to me and asked what I wanted to do.

"What *I* want to do!" I exclaimed with a laugh. "I'm just here for the ride. You and Adamo do what you think best. Until something happens that I understand I'll take orders from you."

"Thank you, sir," said Lynch. Then turning to Adamo he said: "Vito, you go back to your head phones and see if she is any nearer. Also try to calculate her course."

When Adamo had gone back to his instruments Lynch went on with his demonstration how to keep the needle on the right course.

"Is that all we can do?" I asked, motioning my head toward the companionway where Vito had disappeared.

"Well, we can't do much else until we know more about it."

"Suppose it's an enemy sub?"

"We'll report it and see what happens." I had to admit to myself that these two youngsters were a lot cooler about it all than I. Instead of keeping my mind on steering the boat I was conjuring up pictures of us fighting a submarine with our one machine gun.

"Besides," said Lynch, taking the

wheel from my head and swinging her two points to port, "she may be one of our own patrol boats, or a freighter beating her way to some banana port along the coast."

I felt better, and was just getting the feel of the rudder when Adamo came on deck again. As soon as he spoke I knew he had something important. His voice was serious when he said, "It sounds like the real thing, Red. And she isn't very far away. But the worst of it is, she seems to be heading straight for us, coming down from Bartlett Deep."

"Well," said Lynch, taking the piece of paper that Adamo had used to figure out the course of the approaching vessel, "this is what we are here for." Then, as he started for the cabin with Vito, he turned to me and said, "Hold her on that point, Captain. I'm going below to check this thing." And just as his head was about to disappear, "You might wake up those deckhands, if you will."

I DON'T mind telling you I had the jitters and when I started to sing out to the two Caribs who were asleep on the deck a little forward of the cabin, my voice died in my throat. My muscles contracted automatically and I couldn't get out more than a hoarse whisper. You remember how we used to feel in the old days? How tense we used to be while we were crawling through the jungle to where Sandino and some of his gang were hiding. But once the actual fighting started the muscles at the back of your neck and in the calves of your legs stopped aching. I was thoroughly mad at myself for having gone so soft through the years, and to prove to my own satisfaction that I wasn't a coward I hooked the loop of rope we used to lash the rudder over one of the spokes of the wheel and left the cockpit. By the time I got to where the two hands were sleeping I realized that whatever was out there in the night was too far away to hear me. Nevertheless, I gave each of the sleeping men a resounding boot and shouted at the top of my lungs. And before the dazed deckhands could ask me what was the matter I strode back to the binacle.

A cheap trick, I know. But I had to do something to regain my self-respect. And do you know it worked! That act of peevish violence seemed to get the feeling of tightness out of my system, for by the time Lynch and Adamo came on deck I felt like we used to feel once a fight started.

Lynch said, "You had better let me take over, Captain. She's not so very far away, and I want to try to make the shadow of that little island ahead before she comes down on us."

"O.K.," I said, "she's yours. In the meantime, I'm going up to the bow and break out the machine gun."

Once I got the feel of gun grease on my fingers I was my old self again. Every now and then I would look up to see how Lynch was making out in his effort to get us close enough to the island so we would be inside that strip of darkness where the westering moon threw the shadows of the trees across the water. We were moving steadily toward shoal water, and pretty soon one of the Caribs came pattering along the deck with the lead.

I could scarcely feel the air against my cheek, but Lynch's yachting experience had taught him how to get the most out of light weather and soon the shadows touched the edge of our bow where it cleaved the phosphorescent water. The leadsman cast his tallow, and as he followed the line aft he would report his sounding to the man at the helm.

On the third throw Lynch decided we were as close inshore as it was safe to go, so he brought her about. The second crewman quickly dropped the hook, and as it caught, Lynch and the man who had been casting the lead let go the halyards. The leechrings rattled along the mast, and as the last of the canvas hit the deck we were a gray shadow within a darker one, with only two bare sticks half blending into the island background to give away our presence.

From then on it was just a question of waiting. Every few minutes Adamo would come from below to report that the strange vessel was still coming.

I don't know how long we waited. I only know I began to feel damp from the heavy dew that was settling on us,

and when I put my hand on the deck to ease myself into a sitting position behind the gun, the planks were as wet and clammy as if they had been freshly washed.

My eyes began to play tricks on me. And by the time Lynch came forward to keep me company I imagined I had seen several low-lying hulks far out on the moon-glazed sea.

"How you making out, Captain?" asked Lynch, as he came up behind me. "I brought you company."

It was Shamus. The poor dog was as glad to see me as I was to see him. He wagged his tail and made little whimpering sounds as he tried to nuzzle his bristly snout under my arm. The poor tyke was having a hard time on the trip. At home he was used to running free as air, but aboard *El Sueno* he was tied up most of the time. Finally he found a place between my crossed legs and settled down with his head resting on my thigh.

"Is it still coming closer?" I asked Lynch.

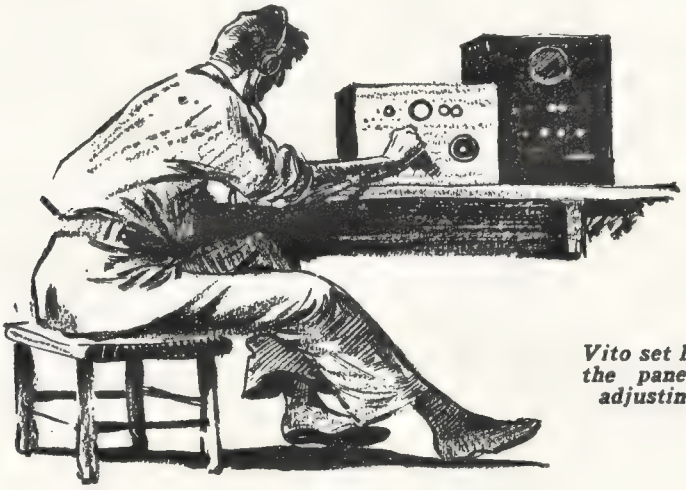
"Yes," he said. "Vito says it won't be long now before she's right opposite us and we'll get a look at her."

"What makes you so sure we will see her?" I asked. "Suppose they decide to pass on the other side of the island? After all this little island in back of us is not so very big."

"No," he said. "It's not very far to the other side of the island, but there's a ledge of tiny coral reefs running off in that direction, and we're anchored beside the only passage they could use."

Suddenly, Shamus raised his head and began to growl. I automatically stroked his head to calm him, and was about to continue my conversation with Lynch when I realized the dog's ears were cocked forward and the ruff along his shoulders was standing up straight.

I hesitated, and Lynch asked in a whisper, "What is it? Do you think he sees something?"



Vito set himself before the panel and began adjusting the dials.

"I don't know," I said, as I put my hand over Shamus' mouth to prevent him from barking, for he was standing up by then and leaning heavily on his stiff front legs as though he were making ready to chase something. "I don't know whether he sees anything, but I'm sure he hears something."

Just then Adamo came slithering along the wet deck on all fours. "She's here Red," he said. "Here, take a look at her," and he handed Lynch a pair of night glasses. "Do you see her?" he asked as Lynch raised the glasses and began to adjust them. "She's over to windward, approximately two points off our port bow."

"Yeh," said Lynch training his glasses where Vito had told him to. "I see her. A sub all right! And she seems to be making about eight knots. Here, Captain," said Lynch, holding the glasses

toward me. "Take a look and see what you can make out."

VITO held Shamus and I took the glasses from Red, fixed them on the sub and turned the thumbscrew until I found the best focus. The first thing that held my attention was her deck gun. As I looked at the piece, shining in the moonlight, I was thinking how ineffectual our machine gun would be against such firepower, and I realized how smart Lynch had been to get us under cover. Still holding the binoculars on her, I asked Lynch how far away the sub was.

"Six hundred yards, I would judge. About all we can do is chart her position and probable course, then report it to the station on Swan Island. They will decide who is to have the pleasure of feeding the pig boat a little lead fodder."

The sub passed from our port to starboard and soon left us and the little island astern. We went below.

The swinging oil lamp hanging from the center of the ceiling was just enough to kill the chill in the small blacked-out cabin. As Vito turned on his set to let it warm up before sending the message Lynch had hastily scribbled, Shamus jumped onto my bunk and promptly stretched himself on the woolen blanket at the foot, his head resting on his paws so he could see everything that went on.

Lynch and Vito were busy coding the message at the tiny desk that folded down in front of the radio panel in the forward bulkhead, when the loudspeaker in the left-hand corner began to blare a tango.

"The station at Tegucigalpa, capital of Honduras," said Vito as he turned it down until we could hardly hear it. Then he settled himself in front of the panel and began adjusting the dials. When they were set the way he wanted them, he spread the paper with the message on it next to his key and went to work. His index finger and thumb flicked against the spider of his telegraph key at lightning speed. Then he stopped and listened into his head phones. He did this several times, then turned with a grin to look up at Red who was leaning over his shoulder. "There they are. Let's go! Hold that paper down flat on the desk, pal!" His nimble fingers began to crackle the dot-dash code over the air.

Vito had repeated the message once, and was getting the confirmation when he ripped off the head phones. At the same instant the loudspeaker began to screech. It was a steady high-pitched note, as when someone scrapes their fingernail on a blackboard.

"What the devil!" said Vito turning down the volume. "Somebody's trying to jam the air!"

"Do you think it could be the sub because they heard us sending?" asked Lynch, a worried expression clouding his freckled face.

"Nah!" said Vito, moving over in front of the receiving set. "No sub ever had a set as powerful as that. They even fogged out Tegucigalpa."

"Who the heck could it be?"

"I don't know. But I'm going to find where it's coming from, if I can." Vito began to swing his directional antenna from side to side to bring in the signal louder or softer. "You get the chart, Red, and as I call off the degrees of variance, you mark them down. We can plot them on the chart, and that should give us a pretty good idea of the direction of their beam."

THEY both worked steady for five or six minutes, Red seated at the table in the center of the cabin, while Vito kept turning the antenna dial a certain number of degrees to the right, and then to the left, calling out the estimated volume for each position.

When they thought they had enough to work with, we all gathered under the lamp and the charts were spread out on the table. Lynch got his dividers and began setting off the course of the screeching radio beam. With the placing of the first few dots on the large chart, and using our own known position we found the jamming came from somewhere along a line that ran from Caratasca Cay to Laguna Brenner Brus, to San Esteban, and on in a straight line a little north of Tegucigalpa.

"That's why we got it over the loud-

speaker as well as through my headphones," said Vito, pointing to how close it came to the capital of Honduras.

"Boy, oh boy!" I said, looking at the map. "That's certainly wild country that line runs through."

"Do you know that part of Honduras?" Lynch asked me.

"I know a little of it," I told him. "That is the Rio Patuca, and Rio Guayape region. There isn't a good-sized town in the whole area. Even San Esteban is nothing more than a fair-sized village."

"What are you thinking of, Red?" asked Vito looking up from the map. And when his mate didn't answer, he added, "Whatever it is, get it out of your head. That station may be located anywhere along that line between here and the Pacific Ocean."

"Well," said Lynch, a slow smile passing over his face as he picked up his instruments and began to fold the chart, "it's something to think about."

"Yeh!" agreed Vito, walking over to the spirit stove to put the water on for the coffee. "It's all right to think about it. But we can't do anything unless we get more to work with."

When the coffee was ready, and we were seated around the table again they asked me about the interior of Honduras. I told them what the country was like. How the low coastal plain with its vast swamps gradually gave way to the mountains. How at points the Cordilleras rose to eight or nine thousand feet, but that most of the country was between three and five thousand feet above sea level.

"Healthy climate, eh?" asked Adamo, passing me a cigarette.

"Healthiest in the world," I told him. "The days are warm, and the nights are just cool enough for a light blanket."

"You sound like a real estate salesman," Lynch said with a laugh, as he refilled our cups.

"I am," I told him. "And wait till you see the boom in this part of the world when this mess is over."

Early the next morning we were awakened by the reassuring roar of an American patrol bomber overhead. As we rushed on deck and stood watching her follow the same course the sub had taken the night before, Lynch turned to us with a big grin on his Irish map, and said, "I'd like to see the splash when they drop their eggs."

It was the start of another fine day. During the night the breeze had freshened, and by the time we had our sail and anchor up we were all more or less looking forward to the long haul from the Caratasca Cays to the Bay Islands. We knew it would be dangerous because it was a stretch of about a hundred and fifty miles of open sea without any little islands to hide among. But that bomber had had a healthy effect on us. The prompt way they acted upon our message made us feel we were not completely cut off from help.

We soon found we were even closer to help than we thought, for about halfway to Roatan we were overhauled by a United States destroyer. When we made ourselves known, and we found we were both headed in the same direction they invited us aboard and *El Sueno* was taken in tow.

It was good to have a change. I admit I'm no sailor, and being cramped up in the little schooner was not my idea of a good time. The chance to get a change of diet and replenish our supply of cigarettes made it seem like a picnic. As for Lynch and Vito, the things they wanted most were ice-water and other cold drinks. They hadn't been in the tropics, away from electric refrigerators as long or as often as I had.

When we hove in sight of Bonacca, the easternmost island of the Bay group, the destroyer was slated to take a different course than ours from there on, so they cut us loose, and we made the rest of the Roatan haul under sail.

CHAPTER II

WILDCAT BROADCAST

WHILE we were at Roatan, which was the western end of our run, we were guests at Bob Eden's plantation. You remember him. Quite a place he has there. That old Scotch buccaneer ancestor of his didn't do so bad for his

descendants when he settled on the island. Bob tells me the whole Bay group was settled by English speaking people, and in spite of belonging to Honduras they have never adopted Spanish as their language. Another odd thing about those people. They are professed prohibitionists, and they really live up to their belief. Reaction to the old rum and pirate days, maybe.

Well, while we're at the Eden place we got our next piece of information about the secret radio station that tried to jam the air the night we reported the position of the sub. Or at least we thought they were trying to jam the air until we heard them again that night on Roatan.

Lynch, Vito Adamo and myself were taking it easy on the veranda after an excellent dinner while Eden was telling us of some of the hurricanes the islands experienced. Shamus was with us too, alongside my chair. Somewhere inside the house a radio was playing. Suddenly the music was drowned out and that awful screech came screaming from the loudspeaker.

Vito jumped up and ran into the house saying, "There it is again, Red. That's our friend."

Eden, surprised because Lynch got right up and ran after Vito, turned to me and asked, "What the devil do they mean, their *friend?* That blasted static cuts in every so often lately!"

"Come on inside, and let's watch what they are doing," I said to Eden. "It's easier to explain while they are doing their stuff."

When we got to where the radio was, we found that Vito had turned the cabinet around so he could fiddle with the mechanism. I don't know exactly what he was doing, but I imagine he was trying to get better reception or more accurate adjustments so he could tell how broad the wave-band of the outlaw station was. Meanwhile, Lynch had followed the aerial wire to see in which direction it was strung.

As Eden and I watched them work, I told him what had happened off the Caratasca Cays.

"You mean to say," he asked, "that screeching isn't static, but made by someone to foul the air?"

"That's right," said Vito turning down the volume. "By the way, Mr. Eden, do you hear it very often?"

"Why, no," our host answered. "That's what made me think it was due to atmospheric conditions. Sometimes as much as two weeks go by without hearing it. But it has been more frequent within the last month."

"Within the last month!" exclaimed Vito. "How long would you say it was since the first time you heard it?"

"Oh, I should judge at least six months."

"Did you hear that, Red?" asked Vito as Lynch came back into the room. "That station has been operating six months or more."

Lynch didn't answer him. Instead, he stopped a few feet inside the door and stood looking at Shamus. Naturally we all turned to see what he was staring at, and there was the dog standing in front of the radio with his black button nose almost touching the cloth covering of

the loudspeaker opening. His ears were cocked forward, and his head bent like the little fox terrier in the old Victor talking-machine ads.

"I wonder what he's listening to," mused Lynch, as we all stood quietly watching the dog's reaction to the subdued rasp. "Turn it up, Vito. Maybe we can hear it."

No sooner had Adamo increased the volume than we knew what had attracted Shamus' attention. There was a dog barking somewhere, and it sounded like it was coming from the radio.

"Wait a minute!" exclaimed Vito, going down on his hands and knees alongside Shamus.

Shamus must have liked the idea of having company while he listened, for he promptly wiggled his stumpy tail a couple of times and reached over and licked Vito's ear.

"Cut it, you dumb mutt!" said Vito laughing, as he wiped his ear. "How do you expect me to hear your pal if you tickle me?"

By then the barking had stopped and as Vito got up from the floor giving Shamus a pat on the head, he said, "You know, Captain, I think Shamus has shown me the answer to this thing. That sound is broadcast over a microphone. And I think it's done by playing a record at greatly increased speed. Did you notice the barking came through at the normal frequency? Furthermore, I think they may be serving a dual purpose: jamming the air and sending a transcribed message at the same time."

"How can they do that?" I asked.

"Why, whoever is receiving the message takes it down on wax and then plays it back at reduced speed so the words become intelligible."

Lynch asked Vito if there was any way he could make a recording of the message.

"Not without a recording machine," answered Vito.

"Say," cut in Eden, "could you use a dictograph machine? One of those contraptions people use to dictate letters into."

"It might work at that," said Adamo. "Have you got one?"

"No. But I can borrow one from a friend of mine in the morning."

THE next day we spent most of the morning rigging up the borrowed machine and getting ready for the evening. We were not at all sure the experiment would work. Nor, for that matter, were we certain the pirate station would even be on the air.

Lynch was afraid we would waste too much precious time waiting for the next broadcast, so he went to work on an alternate plan. He had the necessary second point for working out the probable location of the sending set. And by plotting a line on his charts running from Roatan to Tegucigalpa he found the most logical place for the transmitter to be located was near Guayape.

When he told me where he thought it was, I said I thought he had made a mistake. In the first place, Guayape was in the heart of the interior, one of the most inaccessible places in all of Honduras. There isn't a railway, or automobile road that comes anywhere near the town.

"That's exactly the kind of place they would pick," he insisted. "And furthermore, Captain"—spreading his maps on the table—"if you look, you will see that Guayape is about equidistant from the four important Caribbean ports, Puerto Cistilla, La Ceiba, Tela, and Puerto Cortez. Yet it is not in a direct line between any of them and the capital."

"All very true," I agreed. "But how can they get information to Guayape for broadcasting. Any news they might pick up around the interior of Honduras would not be of much value to the Axis."

"True," said Lynch. "But they could have men in the various ports watching the movements of ships. And they could report that information by portable shortwave sets to Guayape, from where, in turn, it could be relayed to their subs, or even to Europe."

I had to admit he had something, so I told him I would try to figure a way for us to get at them. At the time I doubted whether or not we could get permission to leave what we were doing

and go off hunting enemy agents. Besides, the country around Guayape was no place for three foreigners to try to do anything in secret. The radio is all right for broadcasting news over great distances. But for comparatively short hops, give me the grapevine network that is used by the Indians of Central America. We wouldn't be in the country ten minutes before everyone within miles would know what we looked like, and what we were doing. We would have to cook up some really plausible excuse in order to hide our true intent.

That night luck with with us again. Along about midnight the screeching began. But we were all set for it. Everyone sat quietly waiting while the wax cylinder recorded the high-pitched whine. Even Shamus looked as though he were interested. Maybe he was listening for the bark of his radio friend.

Once the scream stopped and the customary program continued we were all anxious to hear the results. Vito adjusted the cylinder to the slowest speed possible, and asked me to put on the headphones. He started the machine, and I listened. It was only a moment though before I broke off to ask, "Can any of you speak German?"

We were stymied. We had what was undoubtedly an enemy message, but none of us could understand it. In desperation I turned to Eden and asked him if he knew anyone on the island who understood German.

"Yes," he said, "there's one man. But I wouldn't trust him. Until recently he has been too pro-Hitler."

"Well," I said, turning to the boys, "that leaves only one thing to do. We will have to leave at once for headquarters at Tela. This thing is too hot to put off."

ALL the way to the mainland we talked of what we would do if we got our hands on the guys who were operating the wildcat station. As I remember, it was Vito who first called it by that name. But whoever it was the word "wildcat" started me thinking of a possible way to trap the rats. At the time I didn't say anything to Lynch or Vito for fear of raising their hopes only to have them knocked down when we reached Tela.

But much to my surprise, after the commanding officer at Tela heard the translated message, and my plan to put an end to the transmission of information about the movement of allied ships, he gave me the O.K. to go ahead with what I wanted to do. So that was how Vito, Lynch, Shamus, and I happened to head for the interior of Honduras in search of two kinds of sneaking, slinking marauders. One was the American leopard, the biggest and most deadly cat in the world; the other the two-legged variety that hunts helpless merchantmen and sends them to a watery grave. The first is a magnificent fighter, willing to meet any adversary on equal terms; the other always picks a weaker victim.

Anyway, once we had permission to make the trip we didn't lose time. The rest of the day we spent gathering supplies, guns, ammunition, and food. It was a hectic day, and if it hadn't been for the fruit company officials who arranged to have one of their farm overseers meet us at railhead and take care of us I don't think we would have been ready for the early train out of Tela the next morning.

However, the following morning, after breakfast by lamplight, we climbed aboard the little train and began the all day run up the Ulua Valley to Santa Rita. The train was a great joke to Lynch and Vito. They had never ridden on a narrow-gauge line before. Vito said the red plush seats, and the carbide lamps—still lit when we left Tela because the sun had not yet risen—reminded him of the coaches used in the "Gay Nineties" that had been on display at the New York's World Fair. I had to explain that the railroad was not primarily a passenger line but a glorified tramway for getting the fruit from the farms to dockside.

Shortly after we left Tela the conductor came through the train collecting tickets, and when he reached us he explained that Shamus would have to ride in the baggage car. I didn't like the idea of leaving the poor pup alone in the baggage compartment so I asked if we could ride there too.

"Sure!" the conductor agreed. "You can keep me company as well as the dog. That's where I ride between stops."

Asking to ride in the baggage car was a happy thought, because as we rode through thousands upon thousands of acres of bananas the trainman explained something of the many details involved in banana farming. He told how each unit of about twelve hundred acres was under the supervision of an overseer whose job was to direct the various farm tasks, such as cleaning out the brush, pruning the plants, cutting the green but maturing fruit, and hauling it out to the many railroad sidings we passed between Tela and Progreso.

"The only trouble is," added the conductor, "we are at war. Practically all activity has come to a standstill on these farms. There is no reason to cut the fruit unless it can be delivered to the world markets. And you know what chance we have of doing that with the shipping situation the way it is."

It did seem a crying shame that so many hundreds of thousands of stems of fruit should ripen and rot on the farms because of the Nazi wolf pack. And by the time we reached Progreso, where he had an hours lay-over for lunch, we had an additional reason for wanting to find that mysterious radio station without delay.

THE afternoon was much the same as the morning. We rode through the middle of one farm after another. When we stopped at each overseer's—the only official railroad stations on the line—the idle men would be there to meet the train and hear any news the passengers or conductor might have. These men are real victims of war, for with no fruit going out there is no money coming in.

That's the way it was all the length of the Ulua Valley, and we were glad to see the last of the bananas when at sunset we reached railhead where Walter De Forrest was waiting with riding animals and pack mules to take us the rest of the way to his farm on the banks of the Comayagua River.

After an early dinner we got busy on our plans for the trip into the hills. Of course we had to take De Forrest into our confidence. And when I explained what our real purpose was he said he was glad to take a hand. He had wanted to quit his job and return home so he could enlist, but his boss had told him he would be of more use where he was.

"I didn't believe him," said De Forrest, "but if I can be of any help in tracking down this radio station I'll feel I am really getting in my licks at the Axis." As he sat down at the table where he had been tracing the route we were going to take the next day, he asked, "Are you really going after a *tigre* though? Because if you're not, I won't bring my dogs."

"By all means bring them," I said. "We want this to look as much like the real thing as possible."

"O.K.," said De Forrest. "I'll bring them. And if there is a jaguar anywhere around they'll find him."

The dogs he was talking about were the two that had pounced on Shamus as soon as we arrived at the farm. Poor Shamus didn't know quite what to do when he saw those two big brutes come bounding across the lawn. But they were not out to hurt him, for in spite of having the size of their Belgian Police father, they had fur and playful dispositions like their Airedale mother. The first few seconds were bad ones for my little Irishman but they soon roughhoused all the reserve out of him; and by the time we were ready for bed, the three dogs were sleeping side by side as though thy had known one another all their lives.

Before sun-up the next morning the whole house was awake and doing. Even before the last star had faded, the two Indian guides were in the corral getting the pack mules and saddle horses ready. They were to go on ahead with the animals, while the rest of us went up the Comayagua River by boat. So, as soon as they were ready, and the sky began to gray over the *Micos Quemados,* Burned Monkey Mountains, the little cavalcade set out along the dusty trail that runs due east from Santa Rita to Sulaco, where we planned to meet later in the day.

After we had seen the Indians disap-

pear around the first bend in the road we returned to the house for breakfast, and to gather in the last few supplies not sent ahead: guns, ammunition, extra gas for the outboard motor, and Vito's portable listening device were stowed in the shallow metal skiff. The three dogs were put aboard next. And when I saw the arrangements, I figured the ride upstream was going to be anything but comfortable. Shamus was snubbed close to the bow, while the other two were tied to a thwart. All three were fastened so it was impossible for any of us men to move about freely, which was just as well as it turned out.

CHAPTER III

JUNGLE INTERLUDE

WE SHOVED off about the time the sun was strong enough to begin work on last night's dew. With the water so low, because of the dry season, it was not easy to keep in the channel as it wound in and out of sandbars where crocodiles slept in the sun. If we came close to any of those lazy looking beasts, they simply slithered into the water and before you realized it they were gone; out of sight, except for their two knobby eyes protruding above the surface.

All of this was interesting to Lynch and Vito because they had never been in crocodile country before. They were all for getting in a few practice shots, but De Forrest explained it was useless to waste bullets on them. The only thing that would pierce their tough hide was a high powered rifle. And that had to be driven home through one of their few vulnerable spots. So Adamo and Lynch contented themselves with arguing how big the crocodiles were.

Toward mid-morning the country began to change. In the beginning the land was heavy with undergrowth that came down to, and spilled over the river bank. But by the time the sun was halfway up the sky, we were passing small clearings knee deep in *para* grass. And once or twice we saw a pair of *benados*, or deer, lift their heads and twitch their tails while they watched the strange craft struggle against the river current.

The first time we sighted deer very nearly caused an accident. All three dogs spotted them at the same time, and setting up a howl, they started for the bank. But before they got very far they came up short with a grunt. They had forgotten about being tied. But the worst of it was they almost capsized the boat. And if we hadn't been quick to do a little shifting we'd have found ourselves swimming among the crocodiles.

Another hour and the country changed again. We had been traveling through a broad valley, but by that time we had reached the first rise in ground. The banks became steep; and instead of sandbars, the river was dotted with large, smooth-topped boulders that made it even more difficult to follow the channel.

As we worked our way between the rocks we began to hear a steady low rumble like the sound of gravel sliding down a screen. Suddenly, the river angled sharply to the left and the rumble became a roar. The hair on the dogs' back bristled, and all three of them stood stiff legged while their skin rippled as though they were cold. I know I felt the same way when I saw what was ahead of us. For a quarter of a mile or more the river was a mad torrent of white water.

How De Forrest ever expected the motor to push the boat through those rapids without battering its sides to pieces, I don't know. But without the slightest hesitation he pointed the bow straight at the center of that roaring spillway. Slowly, the little put-put fought a winning battle. Several times we were on the verge of being spun around, bow first against a boulder. However, aided by an occasional shove with an oar, we passed one bad spot after another until we came out on the other side of the first range of hills.

The river widened; and again we were between gently sloping banks. The boat was beached, and the dogs set free.

AFTER lunch we took to the river again, traveling through continually changing country. Lynch and Vito got their first view of tropical uplands. They had al-

How he ever expected the motor to push the boat through the rapids I don't know, but he pointed the bow straight at the spillway.

ways thought of the torrid zone as having impenetrable jungles, sluggish rivers and steaming heat. They had never realized that as you go higher the dense undergrowth gives way to what seems to be ordered planting. They didn't know that a few thousand feet above sea level you find yourself in a park—great tall pines, towering into the blue sky, while the ground beneath them is covered, not with bush, but gently waving grass. The giant trees, whose branches start high, and the billowing grass carry your horizon a long way off. And it was in just such country, at the town of Sulaco, that we rejoined the two guides who had set out ahead of us that same morning.

Sulaco, tucked away in a little valley of the Cordilleras, is typical of the small towns in the interior of Honduras. Its hundred-odd inhabitants, living in small frame or adobe houses along its two dusty streets, are all but independent of the rest of the world. The one general store, or trading post, operated by the mayor himself, supplies what few things they need from the outside.

Of course they were expecting us because De Forrest's boys had arrived before we did; so we were not surprised to see practically the whole town waiting

for us when we pulled up on shore. They welcomed De Forrest as an old friend for he had visited Sulaco many times. And it wasn't long before the rest of us were made to feel at home by those friendly people.

We had all kinds of offers to spend the night at different houses, but De Forrest had said we would stay with his friend, Padre Tomas, for if anyone in town knew where either the jaguars or Nazis were, he was the man. The village priest was more or less the clearing house for all the news of the countryside because every Indian that came to town

stopped to gossip with him, and if they had seen any *tigres*, or strange *gringos* they would be sure to tell him about it.

During the evening the priest told us what he knew about the big cats, and from his information De Forrest decided the most likely place to find them would be inside the triangle formed by the three towns, Sulaco, Yoro, and Guayape.

All evening long I wanted to ask whether or not there had been any foreigners, other than ourselves, in the vicinity, but I held my tongue. I figured if there had been the priest would have mentioned it.

Well, the next morning, before the sun was very high, we were on our way. The good Padre went a short distance out of town to see that we started in the right direction. And when I looked back, just before we rode over the crest of the first hill, he was waving his hand in a manner that might have been a blessing.

Our path led across country, uphill and down, through magnificent pine forests. It seemed as though we were traveling wherever our noses pointed; but to the guides, the trail, or absence of one meant nothing. They knew the country like the back of their hands. We were headed for a camp site about fifteen miles from Sulaco, on the banks of a mountain stream, below a *salto*, or waterfall.

The country was ideal for hunting; plenty of space to run down any game we might flush. But it was not until mid-afternoon, when we raised a flock of wild turkeys, that we got a shot, and were sure of a good supper.

We reached our destination about an hour before sunset. It was an ideal location; a small open space set deep in a canyon. It afforded excellent protection, although none was needed, because the weather was still dry. And what was more important, there was plenty of grass and water for the horses and mules. As soon as the animals were taken care of and staked out for the night, we all pitched in and set up camp. The two guides built a fire and prepared the meal while the rest of us strung tarpaulins from tree to tree to make a sort of lean-to. All we needed was something to keep the heavy dew off us.

After an early supper we sat around the campfire while Vita tried to pick up something on his portable radio. But, as we expected, there was no interference with the customary programs. We had enquired about ship sailings before we left Tela, and had been told none was due until the day after next. With this information, and working back to the times when we had heard the wildcat station, we figured they would not broadcast until the following night.

AT SUN-UP the next morning we were out of our blankets and having our breakfast when two Indians walked into camp. We invited them to coffee, and after they had had their second cup we asked if they knew where there were a jaguar.

"*Si señores,*" said one of them, and we all started firing questions. Whereabouts? Would they guide us to the place? How big was he? What did they think was the best way to get him?

"*El tigre* has his lair in a little canyon about two miles this side of the *casa nueva,*" said one of the Indians.

"The new house?" asked De Forrest. "What new house?"

"Why the new house where the two foreigners live," cut in the second Indian.

De Forrest looked at me to make sure I was paying attention before he asked, "How long have these foreigners lived there?"

"More than half a year, no?" asked the first Indian, turning to his companion for confirmation.

"*Si,* that is right." The second nodded his head.

I asked what kind of language they spoke. Was it English? But they both agreed it was not. The foreigners spoke a language they had never heard before. I looked at De Forrest, and from the expression on his face I knew he was thinking the same thing as I. So, in order not to arouse suspicion, I asked them for a detailed description of how to find the little canyon.

They told me and then I asked them how they were so sure that the jaguar was there. They said they had seen his tracks only the day before.

"And *señor,*" said one of them, his dark eyes getting big, "he is *muy grande,* very large. He must be, or his footprints would not show so plainly on the dry, hard, earth."

When we asked them to show us the way, they refused, saying they had to be in Yoro by nightfall because they were hired to drive a herd of pigs to Progreso, and they were a day late already.

"Well, then," asked De Forrest, "how do you advise getting the big fellow?"

One of our own guides was all for routing him out of his den. But unless we could take him completely by surprise it would mean a long chase. Maybe days; because jaguars have been known to travel a hundred miles or more. We didn't have time for such a long hunt. Some other method would have to be used.

"Why not let *el tigre* come to you?" suggested one of the Indians.

"That would be perfect," I said. "But how?"

He explained it was the mating season, and the males usually left their lairs at sundown to meet their mates. "Why not be at the mouth of the canyon to meet him?" he said.

That sounded practical; and when one of De Forrest's men said he knew how to hunt them that way we decided to give it a try.

Once things were decided, everyone turned to and camp was quickly broken so that before long we were riding in search of the little canyon two miles west of the *casa nueva.* If this "new house" were the place we were looking for, it seemed almost too good to be true. But the more I thought about it as we rode along, the more logical it seemed. The occupants were strangers who spoke a language the Indians had never heard, it could hardly be English, because most of the Indians of Central America, and especially those who visited the north coast, had a smattering of English words. Added to that was the fact that these foreigners had lived there for six months or a little more. That was about the length of time since Eden first heard the secret radio station broadcast its eerie wail.

Nevertheless, the more I thought about it, the more difficult the situation became. Even if we were right in our guess, and the transmitter was located in the house, how were we going to prove it? We couldn't barge in and demand the right to search the house. It just can't be done without a warrant. And if these men did have a sending set in the house they would probably shoot us before we could even get anywhere near it.

All the way to the mouth of the can-

yon I racked my brain trying to figure a method. But once we got a look at the size of the jaguar's tracks, fresh ones too, showing he was returned from his travels, everybody became excited about the hunt. Even the dogs were on edge, and hated the idea of being leashed and muzzled.

CHAPTER IV

EL TIGRE

BY FOUR in the afternoon everything was set. Each man knew exactly what was expected of him when the actual kill began. At last, just as the jaguar was probably taking his first long, slow stretch, everyone was at his post. Beginning at the mouth of the canyon, looking up, we were stationed in the following order. First, one of the guides, a few yards to the right of the jaguar's trail. Then, about twenty yards further in, came Vito. And finally, still further along on the steep slope I was waiting with Shamus. While on the opposite side in the same order were the second guide, Lynch, and De Forrest. Each of the white men had a dog with him.

When we were all in position the long wait began. The day had gone quickly, but the two hours until darkness seemed to crawl. The westering sun seemed to come to a halt and hang a few feet above the rim-rock until I thought night would never fall. Slowly, while my nerves became jumpier and jumpier, the orange sun edged over the canyon walls, and shadows began to dim the valley floor. Gradually the patch of sky overhead turned to gray, then back to blue again, a midnight blue, and the first star broke through the curtain of darkness. The night wind rustled the leaves on the smaller trees, and set the pines to hissing at one another. Crouched beside Shamus, holding him by the collar, I could feel his bristly hair ruffle against my bare arm as it rested along his back. A gray-white snake hawk whirred past on his way to the topmost branch of the tallest tree at the head of the valley.

From far up the canyon came a muffled roar. The signal we were waiting for. *El tigre* had left his bed and was on his way to meet his lady. The guide at the mouth of the canyon gave the answering call, and again the big cat roared.

Both Shamus and I became tense. I could feel his front legs stiffen, and he leaned forward against the grip I had on his muzzle and collar.

Once more the big male roared. Nearer this time.

At the answer from the decoy, I slipped Shamus' muzzle, but held his mouth shut with my hand. Both the dog and myself shivered. Every muscle in my body ached. The big cat roared again. This time so close he seemed to bellow in my very face.

One of the dogs across the way yelped and I let Shamus go, yelling, "Up and at him, boy! Go get him!"

He dug his claws into the rocky shale, and away he went. As he bounded down the slope I could hear all three dogs take up the cry of kill. They were headed for the open space on the canyon floor where the air was filled with snarls and roars of rage. At that instant the moon's rays narrowed the angle until they shone full on the most fearsome, yet most magnificent sight I have ever seen—two hundred pounds of fight and fury. The great spotted beast stood at bay, ready to fight, to kill. The powerful shoulders crouched low, rump in the air, the massive wide-jawed head with bared fangs swung from side to side watching for the first dog to attack. As Shamus dashed into the clearing the great tawny pendulum broke its arc, tossing its shadowed maw skyward until the moon reflected itself in the molten yellow eyes, and the fire of the jungle rage seemed to burst into flame.

ONE of the other dogs broke into the open, and the giant cat turned his head to meet the new attack. Shamus' chance had come. He leaped, teeth gnashing, ready to find their mark in that soft powerful shoulder. But too late! The huge head snapped back, and the deadly paw hit Shamus a glancing, ripping blow on the side of the head. He tumbled into a thicket. Regaining his feet he stood shaking his head like a

stunned boxer while his two companions followed through. One was trying to sink his teeth into the vital throat, the other to hamstring him on the rear flank.

The great yellow-and-black fighter almost floundered once under the impact of the two big dogs, but he managed to fight free, and tumble another of his attackers into the brush. By that time, we men realized the jungle monarch was too much for the dogs, and we all started for the clearing with our guns at ready. But we were too late. The third dog was down with very nearly all his ribs exposed on one side, and the *tigre* slinking off toward the mouth of the canyon.

Two of us did manage to get a quick shot at the fast disappearing rump but we were not certain they had reached their mark.

As soon as *el tigre* had made the open country we turned back to see what damage he had inflicted on the dogs. I was afraid that he had really crippled Shamus, but when I examined him I found him suffering only from a badly shredded ear. Of course it was serious enough, but fortunately the jaguar's sharp claws had not dug deep enough to do any permanent harm. However, the poor dog that had gotten it in the ribs was not so lucky. His whole side had been ripped wide, and it wasn't many minutes before we had to put him out of his pain. That left us with only one sound dog, and one with a bleeding ear. Nevertheless, we decided to trail the big cat, for he too was suffering from wounds received in the melée, or from one of our bullets. And judging by the amount of blood he was losing he couldn't range very far before resting in order to nurse his hurt.

While Lynch and I did what we could for Shamus, the others went to get the horses and mules where we had hidden them so they would be out of the way when the kill took place.

"I have never seen such a majestic animal," said Lynch, holding Shamus' head while I tied my handkerchief around the bleeding ear. "The jaguar, I mean," he added, letting go the dog's snout.

De Forrest, who was mad as the devil because *el tigre* had gotten one of his dogs, was anxious to get started, so we all mounted and set the two dogs on the gore spattered trail. It was not difficult for Shamus and his partner to follow the scent because the big cat was badly wounded and losing blood fast. We all knew it would not be long before we caught up with him. No beast could lose so much of his strength and keep traveling.

One mile through the moon silvered pines, and the dogs began to bark. *El tigre* was not far ahead. His blood was still wet on the tall grass where his flank had brushed. Nearer and nearer we came to him, and the dogs became frenzied by the smell of new blood.

Every man in the party rode with his eyes glued to the trail a few yards ahead. We expected our quarry to make his last stand at any minute. And this time we were not going to leave all the work for the tired dogs. We intended to finish him off with rifle fire.

We were so intent upon the hunt the whole party was out of the forest and standing on the edge of a large meadow before we realized it. The dogs were already tearing through the undulating grass when the guides halted, and pointing to a small group of buildings far across the clearing, said, *"La casa nueva!"*

卐 WE HAD completely forgotten about *the new house,* and now it was too late to do anything about it. The dogs, hot on the heels of the jaguar, had already announced our coming, and as we stood wondering what to do, a door opened in the lighted house and two men came out to see what was going on.

"Come on!" said De Forrest, digging his spurs in his horse. "Let's ride up to the house as though we suspected nothing. Our game went that way, so what is more natural than we follow it."

Of course he was right. And as we approached the soft-shadowed buildings standing in the brightly moon-lit field I was thinking that our good luck was still with us.

Vito came close to me and leaned over in his saddle to whisper, "This is a break for us, eh, Captain? I'll bet they have

the transmitter in one of those small buildings in back of the house."

"Quiet!" I told him, for we were getting near the two men. "Remember, we are hunting jaguar, so act as though that were the only thing in the world you are interested in at present."

"O. K.," said Vito, straightening up in his saddle. "But I'll bet I'm right."

I didn't get a chance to agree with him, because just then one of the men standing in front of the house called out in Spanish, "Who is it? And what do you want?"

His accent was bad. All his vowels started deep in his throat instead of the hollow of his mouth. He was a German all right! And he had a rifle resting in the crook of his arm.

De Forrest was at the head of our group so he gave his name, saying we were after a jaguar our dogs were following.

"So that is what they are chasing," said the German as he walked toward us.

In the brilliant moonlight I was able to get a good look at him. At first glance I would have said he was in his late thirties. But it was hard to judge his exact age because he was one of those dark-haired Germans, of medium height, with a strong peasant body, who achieve prime in youth and hold it far into age. When he reached a spot a yard or so in front of De Forrest, far enough away from us to give him plenty of room to use his rifle, he stood peering at us from under heavy black eyebrows. "Americans, aren't you?"

"Why, yes," said De Forrest. "We are from the coast. I am overseer of Santa Rita plantation, and these gentlemen are—" He pointed to each one of us.

As our names were mentioned the German turned his head toward us and acknowledged each introduction by a slight nod. He seemed to be trying to think of something to say. But the only thing that came out was his own name. "I am Franz Weber." Then, jerking his chin as though to point over his right shoulder to where his companion was standing near the house, he added, "My partner is Wolfgang Haupt."

Once the introductions were over there was an awkward silence. We sat in our saddles waiting for the customary invitation to continue on across his meadow. But evidently Weber had never heard of the Honduran habit of offering everything you have to any stranger who chances to visit your place.

In the meantime the dogs had reached the far side of the open fields and had taken to the woods again. Their barking was a bit desultory. It sounded just often enough to let us know they were still on the trail. Suddenly their barking became yapping. We all knew what that meant, and we began to squirm in our saddles, anxious to get going.

Even Weber noticed it and turned to look in the direction the dogs had taken. Then swinging back toward us he said, "It sounds like they have treed him! He must be up in the old *ceiba* tree."

I knew the others felt the same as I. And as Weber seemed ignorant of the expected courtesy I took the bull by the horns and asked if he and his partner wouldn't come along with us for the kill.

He looked up at me and said, "Yes, I think Haupt would like that too," and he waved for his friend to join us as we started forward.

WE WALKED our animals. There was no hurry now. The dogs would keep the jaguar where he was until we arrived. Haupt joined us as we came into line with the house and barns. He too carried a rifle. But that was about as far as the similarity went. Haupt was as blond as Weber was dark. In the moonlight his close cropped hair almost made him look as though he were bald. He was young, not over twenty-five. And as he came wading through the knee-deep grass, his long angular body reminded me of some raw-boned Norse sailors I have seen.

We didn't stop for introductions, but made them on the way. Another thing about Haupt that struck me at the time was the quality of his Spanish. He had not learned it in Latin America. In all probability he had started in Germany and continued his study of the language in Spain while fighting for Franco, because he tried to imitate the almost

lisping sound that only comes naturally to true Castillians. Spanish-Americans give the *s* sound to most of their c's.

All the introductions were completed by the time we reached the spot where the dogs had entered the woods. The gap in the fence was fairly narrow and only one of us could get through at a time. While we milled around waiting

He stood peering at us from under heavy black brows. "Americans, aren't you?" he asked.

our turn, Lynch rode up alongside me and asked, "How are we going to search those barns, and the house, Captain?"

"Never mind that now," I told him. "We'll figure a way while we are getting *el tigre*."

"O. K.," he said, going back to join Vito as I rode into the woods.

It was not very far to the big *ceiba* tree of which Weber had spoken. And he was right about the dogs having treed our quarry. They were almost crazy with wanting to get at the jaguar. They circled, and circled the immense trunk, barking continuously, and only standing still when they stood with their front paws against the great bole and barked the louder at the big cat crouched somewhere overhead, among the branches.

We stopped outside the shadow of the wide-spreading limbs. We were not taking any chances. It was impossible to see the wounded animal through the heavy foliage. And if we should ride underneath him he might be crazed by pain to the point where he would jump on the first thing that came along.

De Forrest told everybody to dismount and spread out in a circle around the tree. He said that when we were all set he would use his flashlight to pick out the gleam from the jaguar's eyes.

We all started to fan out around the tree. I remember looking for Vito and Lynch, but I didn't see them in the shadowy gloom. They were somewhere on the other side of the circle, I assumed, near De Forrest.

However, I didn't get a chance to find out at the moment because the beam from the flashlight began to probe its way through the broad green leaves. Everyone's eyes were turned upward waiting to get the blood-orange glow from *el tigre's* red-lined, murder-inflamed eyes. Slowly, almost painfully, we followed the exploring needle of light as it threaded its path, turning night-blacked leaves into irregular flakes of green gold.

Suddenly one of the guides to my right called to De Forrest. "Throw your light over here, *señor!* I think I felt a drop of blood hit me on the arm."

We all hurried over to where the Indian's voice came from. We could see De Forrest because of his light. And when he joined our little knot he began searching through the branches overhead.

"There he is!" exclaimed Weber, hurrying to De Forrest's side and pointing his arm. "There! On that big limb!" And as the light found the place we all saw the tawny striped tail hanging over the edge of a thick branch about twenty-five or thirty feet above the ground.

The big cat was stretched out along the limb. He was trying to hide. He knew his strength was fast ebbing with his blood, and that his only hope lay in being able to hold on until his strength returned.

El tigre was smart to a degree; like all hunted animals and men. He was grasping a straw. Only this time it was a heavy limb. His long lithe body was pressed so close to the branch it was all but impossible to get a shot at a vital spot. Our only hope was to send a bullet crashing through the massive head as he

swung it from side to side trying to keep an eye on his enemies.

"All right!" said De Forrest, holding his flashlight on the place where the fang-bared head had been an instant before. "The next time he shows, let him have it!"

We all raised our rifles. I remember looking along my sights and picking up a shiny patch on the black bark. It must have been where the fear-thickened saliva had come to rest when it oozed between the saber teeth and dripped from the pink folds of the slack jowels. My up-raised arms began to ache. I was afraid they were going to start trembling when suddenly two blood-red orbs flashed in front of me. My trigger finger squeezed against the cold metal and instantaneously my eardrums were blasted by a terrific report. The big cat's eyes disappeared, and something thudded to the ground in front of us. The tremendous impact of three or four high-powered bullets had toppled the jungle monarch from his throne.

CHAPTER V

A DOG'S LIFE

NONE of us approached the dead beast. Instead, we just stood in a circle watching De Forrest slowly pass the light from riddled head along the blood-wet flanks to the now limp tail. No one spoke. Even the dogs had stopped barking and were gingerly sniffing their way closer to the carcass. I guess Shamus and his mate felt the same as we men did; a little let down by the sudden disappearance of so much fight and fury. It seemed almost impossible that so much life could be counter-balanced by a few pellets of lead.

De Forrest moved in closer, and with the toe of his boot nudged the grisly head. "He's dead all right!" he said, and we all sort of let our shoulders and arms drop as we relaxed our muscles once we were sure all danger was passed. Even the dogs seemed to lose all interest in the dead jaguar. A minute before, when *el tigre* might have meant death to either Shamus or the other dog, they too stood with shoulders hunched and ruff stiffened ready to fight. But once the hunt was over they showed no further interest in the quarry. Instead, they walked away, and began mingling with the men, looking for approval and sympathy.

Shamus came to me and gently brushed his sore head against my leg while he whimpered from the pain that for the first time was able to force its way into his consciousness. I knelt beside him, and asked De Forrest to shine his lamp on him so I could examine the wound.

Everyone gathered in a circle around me as I untied the handkerchief from around Shamus' ear. The wound was a bad one. The ear was in shreds, and I knew he would have to lose it. But I couldn't do anything at the time, so I decided to bandage it up again until we got to some place where I could cut the ear off with a sterile razor blade.

"The only clean handkerchief I had in my pocket was the one I had already used, so I asked Lynch to loan me one of his.

"He's not here," said one of the guides.

"What do you mean?" I asked. "Where is he?"

"He and the other *señor* turned back toward the house when we left the pasture and came into the woods."

I looked up, startled. And as I realized what that meant, I saw the two Germans tighten their grip on their rifles and shift their weight to the balls of their feet. It was impossible to see their faces. De Forrest still held his flashlight on Shamus. But I knew I had better act quickly, so grabbing my rifle that lay on the ground beside me I straightened up with the barrel pointing at Weber and Haupt.

"Sorry gentlemen," I said, covering them both, "but you will have to drop your rifles. We cannot take any chances until we see what Vito and Lynch found at your place."

I was watching them closely. They seemed taken completely by surprise. Haupt let go of his gun as I ordered. But Weber, who was standing in the full glare of De Forrest's lamp seemed to hesitate. The veins in his neck began to

swell, and his mouth clamped shut while his eyes blazed jet with fury. His right hand edged toward the trigger guard on his carbine and I let him have my gun barrel across the wrist.

He dropped his weapon all right! And as it hit the ground he opened up with some plain and fancy cussing. He had quite an impressive vocabulary of Spanish swear words. But they were not enough. He had to ring in a number of German ones to tell us exactly what he thought of us. He even went so far as to say we were barbarians because we violated his hospitality. That gave us a laugh when we found out what they were doing in Honduras.

Standing there under the branches of that giant *ceiba*, listening to Weber rant and rave gave me an excellent idea of how the Nazi mind works. Anything goes, provided they are on the giving end. But when the shoe is on the other foot, the dirty swine are the first to yell foul.

Finally, Weber even got on Haupt's nerves, and he told him to shut-up. "If you hadn't been so sure there was no one with any brains around here this would never have happened. Just wait until word of this reaches the leader." Then he added ominously, looking at Weber with disgust, "Remember how the party pays off for stupidity?" And he turned his back on his partner.

Like the vermin they are, they were turning on one another as soon as the going got tough.

AFTER that there was nothing left but to march them back to their own house where we found Lynch and Adamo grinning like two Cheshire cats because they had proved their hunch was right.

They heard us coming, for as we approached the front of the house Lynch threw open the door, and said, "Welcome to our objective gentlemen. Come inside and have a look at one of the prettiest little bridges between United Nations' ships and men and death you will ever have the pleasure of seeing."

At that instant, Haupt, who was near-

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est the door, tried to rush past Lynch. But the American was ready for him, and brought the heavy barrel of his service revolver down on the German's skull with a sickening crack. The blond super-man's jaw dropped as his knees buckled under him, and he sprawled out on the floor just over the doorsill.

"That makes me feel better," said Red, looking up from where Haupt's blood was already beginning to stain the straw matting that covered the floor. "Now, if Weber wants to make my evening a complete success, he can try the same thing."

But the dark German had lost all his fight. What he had just seen even silenced his filthy mouth, and he walked into the house with his tail between his legs like the yellow cur he was.

And speaking of dogs. We found the one Shamus had heard over the radio the night we solved the mystery of the squeal that jammed the air waves. He was chained to the leg of a table in the little inside room the Germans had been using as a broadcasting studio. Unlike his masters, he was no cur, but as fine a specimen of a half-grown Boxer as I'd ever seen.

He was friendly too; because when we opened the door to the studio he was standing on his hind legs with his paws on Vito's thigh, while the radio man was seated in front of the transmitter panel adjusting the dials. As soon as he saw Shamus, who followed me into the room, the Boxer's ears cocked forward, and his stump tail seemed to wiggle his whole rear end as he strained against his chain in an attempt to swap sniffs with the woeful looking Irish terrier.

Swinging around in the swivel chair, Vito removed the earphones, and looking at me with a grin said, "Well, Captain, we hit it right on the nose this time. And at the right moment too, if I don't miss my guess. I think they were all set to send another one of their transcriptions," he finished, pointing to a victrola beside him on the table.

"Let's turn it on and hear what they had in store for some of our ships," I said, walking over to the machine, and lifting the needle arm from its rest.

"It's no use." said Lynch. "We already tried that. The message is in German, like all the others." Then, turning to where Weber stood with his hands tied behind him, he said, with disappointment in his voice, "I don't suppose it would do any good to try to beat the information out of this skunk!"

"No," I said, agreeing with him. "They know they have us over a barrel regarding their latest record."

"And they won't give us a chance to get it on the Hit Parade," cut in Vito with a laugh.

"You're right, Vito," I said. "The only thing left for us to do is destroy what equipment we can't take with us, and hurry back to Tela with our prisoners. Perhaps the authorities there can go to work on them and get some information."

"WAIT a minute!" said De Forrest, who had been listening to what we were saying. "Before you start making a shambles of this place, may I suggest a way for you to complete this job. A way you can get not only these two birds here, but their little playmates waiting in the pig-boats off shore?"

"Go ahead," I told him. "We are all in this thing together, and if what you have in mind works, it will be the answer we are looking for."

"Well," began De Forrest, "if Vito can get in touch with Tela, he can tell them we have control of this wildcat station. Also that we found a new record they were going to send out over the air tonight. Tell Tela that you will go through with the broadcast as planned by the Germans. In that way the wolf pack of U-boats will rendezvous at the designated place, and Tela can arrange to have a welcoming committee on hand to meet them."

It must have been funny to watch the effect De Forrest's plan had on Lynch, Vito, and myself. We didn't say a word. We all looked at one another in silence as our faces began to crack into big smiles.

Vito jumped up from his chair, and throwing his arm across De Forrest's shoulder patted him on the back saying, "Boy, oh, boy! You may be a banana

farmer, but for my money, you're a genius!" And letting go De Forrest, he ran back to the table saying, "Give me a paper and pencil. I'll write the message and get it on the air immediately."

But as he started to write, Vito hesitated, and turning to us with a long face said, "It won't work. We can't send a straight message like that over the air. Anybody can pick it up, even those subs standing by for Weber, and Haupt's broadcast. I would leave my code book in Tela at a time like this!" he added disgustedly, tossing the pencil and pad away from him.

"We can still do it!" said Lynch. "Why can't we send a cryptic message, and depend on their good sense to figure it out. I think it is worth the try anyway."

The quarry was worth the try, we all agreed, so we got to work, and this was the message Adamo sent to the boys down on the coast: *Jaguar hunt very successful. Found two cubs in lair. Bringing them back alive, but not for Frank Buck. Believe we have a new record. We will send the details at the usual time. We hope you are as successful when you go hunting.*

Well, after that there was nothing left to do but broadcast the record that Weber and Haupt had already prepared, and pray that Tela understood what we meant.

The next morning, after wrecking what we couldn't take with us, we started back to the coast. With the exception of our two prisoners, everyone was in good spirits. Even De Forrest felt better than he did the previous evening. He was taking the Boxer to replace the dog he had lost.

And whatever you do, don't ask me whether or not they got those submarines. I don't know. But I have noticed what looked like freshly painted pictures of submarines on the forward guns of several destroyers that make this port their base.

WHEN Steve Sundra stopped talking he rocked forward in his chair, and reaching down patted his dog. "Yes," he said stroking Shamus' back, "hunting jaguars by following a radio directional beam is a very scientific method, isn't it boy?" Then he added with a smile as the dog looked up at him and wagged his tail, "But you are liable to lose your ear doing it!"

THE EXILE

By HAL G. EVARTS

ILLUSTRATED BY PETER KUHLHOFF

HATE festered in his heart as a bullet might fester in another man's leg. The reality of exile he had learned to accept; it was not that. But now they were reaching after him, persecuting him still. And because he was too proud for self-pity and too hardened for mere bitterness it seemed to Count Alexis Mitrov that nothing but hate was left.

Through a restaurant window he could see across the oasis to the new airfield and the tamarisk-covered dunes and yellow hills beyond, where once he had shot game for market. He had face among the officials because he rode a Badakshani charger and owned his rifle, so that the refusal to renew his permit could be laid to only one thing: Bolshevik pressure. That it was Chinese territory did not matter; the Bolsheviks wanted him out of the way.

"The first plane comes today," Niki ventured.

Mitrov sipped his vodka, conscious that he could not pay. His hunting—his last resource—they had taken away too. Now even his horse and gun were useless.

"From Moscow," Niki said. "Moscow! Think of it, *barin*."

Mitrov frowned at the clock. He was angry for having agreed to meet Kuhun Aziz. He disliked the Tungan and he suspected he would like his offer still less, but Aziz had hinted at money.

Azis came for him, the knife glittering in his hand. Before Mitrov could move he felt the blade cold against his neck.

Niki refilled his glass. "The Russians will refuel here."

"Russians?" Mitrov snorted. "Jackals! Red jackals!"

Niki was silent a moment, glancing around the empty room, then he said apologetically, "But they are the first we have seen in two years, *barin.*"

Mitrov's brows lifted. Nicholas Rozhevki was the only other Russian in Turlik, and Mitrov had often reflected how ironic it was, how grimly ironic, that of all men he should be marooned for life with this fat little fool of a cook. It was one more grudge he held against them.

"They will be hungry, those fliers. It would be good to cook a real meal again." Niki sighed. "*Kasha, galubsty, bliny* with sour cream—"

"Are you in the restaurant business now, Count Mitrov?" a voice interrupted.

A tall, dark muscular man in a sheepskin coat closed the door behind him, shutting out the harsh midday sun, and crossed to Mitrov's table. Aziz was smiling and Mitrov wondered why he allowed himself to be irritated so by a horse trader, but without changing expression he said, "Get out, Niki."

AZIZ waited with his hands on his hips, gazing down. "Alexis Mitrov," he said softly. "Captain in the White Armies. Expert marksman. What a shame your country does not appreciate you."

Mitrov colored. Aziz' sarcasm ruffled as much as it surprised him. Guardedly he said, "They are at war. What can one expect?"

Aziz laughed. "Surely one cannot expect Count Mitrov to labor like a coolie. Perhaps you will hunt for me."

Aziz was still smiling but there was no mirth in his eyes, and Mitrov sensed the urgency behind his manner. "Without a permit it is impossible," he said.

"Impossible? I supposed nothing was impossible to a man who can kill antelope at five hundred *rashin.*"

He suffered Aziz' appraisal without answering. The white hair made him look old, Mitrov realized, but his eyes were good and his nerves were steady. He was not dead accurate at that range, not any longer, but he was accurate enough. "Without ammunition?"

Almost too eagerly, Mitrov thought, Aziz reached for his rifle, resting against a chair. "That can be arranged," Aziz said after a brief examination. "There are ways of getting ammunition."

A vague uneasiness took shape in Mitrov. Cartridges for his rifle, an American Remington, were not easily come by in Turkistan, and that Aziz should be able to provide .30-06's just now, struck him as a long coincidence. As though guessing his thoughts Aziz said quickly, "Oh, this is no ordinary hunt. Everything has been arranged."

"And the game?"

"Big game. Big enough to interest even you."

Mitrov knew he was being mocked in some obscure and unpleasant way, but also he felt certain that Aziz was in no better position to bargain than he, Mitrov, was himself. "That," he said, "would depend on the price."

From a dirty pouch Aziz counted off five one-thousand dollar bills. "If you do as well as I hope," he said, "there will be five more."

It was more than Mitrov could earn in normal times, or could conceive his services were worth—so much more that he hesitated. It occurred to him that for a native Aziz was too fluent in Russian, and he would have sworn that the knife handle protruding from Aziz' sash was foreign made. Beyond any doubt he knew he disliked the man.

"Of course you will not mention this to anyone," Aziz went on as though the matter were settled.

Mitrov's tone took on a sharp edge. "Of course."

"And be at my camp tonight, say, one hour after sundown. Alone."

"Tonight, alone," Mitrov repeated. "And if I should change my mind?"

Aziz' mouth straightened under his big hooked nose. Standing there with his legs apart and his head hunched forward he reminded Mitrov of a hawk. "I don't believe you will change your mind," he said.

For some time after Aziz had gone

Mitrov stared at his untouched drink. Then he tossed it off and called Niki from the kitchen. "How much do I owe?" he demanded. "All these months?"

Reproach clouded Niki's eyes. "But you owe nothing," he protested.

Mitrov thrust out one of the bills.

Niki shook his head. "But I cannot. It is enough that the *Gras* comes here. It is a privilege. An honor—"

"Take it," Mitrov snapped. "I pay my bills."

A FEW minutes after sundown Mitrov jogged out of the bazaar, unnoticed in the crowds that were streaming toward the airfield. During the afternoon he had oiled and cleaned his rifle, fed his horse and made what few other preparations he could. Now as he approached the edge of town he suspected that he would not be coming back, not for a while at least.

The camp, deep in a poplar grove, was deserted except for Aziz. He rode forward to meet Mitrov and with a curt nod led off in another direction. As his eyes adjusted to the darkness Mitrov saw that what he first had thought to be some kind of holster over Aziz' shoulder was a binocular case, but the knowledge failed to ease the tension that was mounting in him.

After a short distance the trees thinned out. Aziz dismounted and tied both animals with loose slip knots. Motioning Mitrov to follow, he walked on silently through a tangle of scrub. The terrain seemed familiar but even so Mitrov was unprepared when they reached the first clearing.

A graveled surface stretched away just below, uneven in patches and as yet unfenced, but otherwise a small but passable airplane runway. By the light of a burning flare he could make out Chinese troops posted at intervals along one edge and directly opposite a knot of men beside the hangar. With somewhat of a shock the other details clicked into a pattern in his mind.

"You brought your telescope sight?" Aziz whispered.

Mitrov nodded. All at once his throat seemed too dry for speech.

"All right," Aziz said, extending his hand. "Here. This is all you'll have time for."

Mitrov rolled the steeljackets together in his palm, feeling their cold sleekness. At five hundred *rashin,* three hundred seventy-five yards, he knew exactly what they would penetrate. More slowly than was necessary he loaded the magazine. The sixth shell he slipped in his pocket. "You are confident that I won't miss," he said.

Aziz chuckled. "Quite confident. I know your record, you see." He tapped the stamp on Mitrov's rifle stock. "1917. The double eagle of Imperial Russia. You were armed by the Americans in Siberia and fought the Soviets under Annenkov."

"What has my—record to do with it?" he asked.

"You do not like Reds, Count Mitrov."

A shudder passed over him. Toward the past he had developed a sort of semi-oblivion but at rare moments it came surging back to shake and sicken him like an old passion. They had murdered his family, confiscated his estates, driven him into the Gobi. Twenty-five years had seemed a very long time to Mitrov. "To kill one Bolshevik you take great pains," he said finally.

"To kill this one," Aziz said, "yes."

The Tungan raised his hand in warning and faded off in the night. Mitrov crouched down, weighing this last remark. The field was a link in the new short route to Chungking. Anyone flying it the first time, he reasoned, must be military traffic in a desperate hurry, and therefore important. Aziz was not, he knew now, a man to concern himself with unimportant issues.

He listened for the hum of motors, and once imagined that he heard a faint thudding noise nearby. Then Aziz rejoined him. "Everything is fine," Aziz said, pleased. "This will be no trouble."

Because he did not share his confidence Mitrov kept still, but Aziz said, "There is one detail I neglected—that cook."

"What of him?"

"He saw us together. He will not get ideas?"

Mitrov smiled thinly, recalling Niki's

chatter of food. Nicholas Rozhevki had been cook in a Romanoff household before the Revolution and exile had only strengthened his sympathies. As much as he could count on anything Mitrov knew he could count on Niki's discretion. "He knows his place," he said.

AZIZ grunted and started ahead through the tamarisk. It was scattered and they had to utilize each clump, each ridge and depression, crawling on their knees, so that Mitrov was panting when they gained the final fringe. Something soft and freshly warm met his groping hand and he stopped abruptly. A soldier lay face down in the sand.

Mitrov had grown so accustomed to death that he did not immediately recognize the fear that stirred in him. He was, rather, fascinated by the quiet competence with which Aziz had taken care of this sentry, and although the Tungan apparently had no gun Mitrov felt like an amateur at the mercy of a professional.

He looked up to find Aziz regarding him curiously. "There are more on either side," Aziz said, "so be careful."

With his finger Aziz traced the airport's rectangular shape, indicating their own position. "The plane will come into the wind this way and taxi back to the hangar, opposite us. Besides the pilots there are six passengers. I will point out the one you are to—liquidate." Aziz grinned. "Such a useful Communist word—liquidate."

"You expect miracles," Mitrov said. "Nobody could hit one man out of six. Not from here."

"Not so difficult as it sounds. You will notice the raised platform over there. Well, he mounts that to be welcomed by the Chinese commandant. The two of them will be in full view, alone, during the speech."

"And then?"

"And then," Aziz said, "it will be time for us to leave."

Ordinarily, with the drome organized and better patrolled, such an attempt would be suicidal, Mitrov knew, but the likelihood, certainty even, of general confusion when the plane landed was in their favor. The field was narrow at this point and although the shot was hard it was not impossible. The target would be outlined by light from landing flares, while on the other hand it was a moonless night, assuring a maximum chance of escape once they reached the horses. The longer he studied the layout for flaws the more he was forced to admire Aziz' planning.

Aziz said, "It will be here any minute."

On his belly the Tungan crept into the open. He went a few feet, pressed flat, advanced a few more. Mitrov waited until he made the shelter of a low sand mound on the field's very edge. Then Mitrov, careful not to foul his gun muzzle, wriggled after him.

Aziz had out his glasses. "He is in uniform," Aziz said. "He should be easy to identify."

Mitrov slid down beside him and scooped out a barrel rest. It was queer, he thought, how actually uncommunicative Aziz had been, and while he could no longer deny that he was afraid, he had to know. "Who?" he said.

From the corner of his mouth Aziz said, "Does it matter much, Count Mitrov?"

"No," Mitrov said slowly, "it doesn't matter much, not if I get the right one."

"And if you should get another one or two, by accident? What a shame, eh, *barin*? You Russians are so sentimental."

Mitrov stiffened. Aziz was ridiculing him, he knew, mimicking the absurd deference of Nicholas Rozhevki. The memory of the cook and his own humiliation goaded him on. "I think you had better tell me," he said.

Aziz twisted around, one hand on his sash. "Is that a threat?"

Mitrov locked the bolt with a snap. "Listen!"

Footsteps crunched close by. Mitrov held his breath. A shadow glided over their mound as the steps grew louder and then receded. Two soldiers passed out of sight.

"All I have to do is shout to bring them running. I can say I was looking for my horses and found you instead. They will believe me. But you. . . ." Aziz' whisper was scornful.

Mitrov closed his eyes, feeling a great

heaviness. It was true. He was an outcast, a man without standing, passport or country. Whatever he said or did was suspect. It was even conceivable that they might turn him over to the Bolsheviks.

HE STARTED suddenly as a twig snapped in the brush behind. Aziz cocked his head. He gave Mitrov's arm a warning squeeze, slipped away and with almost cat-like stealth disappeared. For what seemed like an unbearable length of time Mitrov lay rigid. He could hear nothing but a murmur from across the field but he had an uncomfortable sense of being watched, either by Aziz or someone else.

At length to ease his nervousness he peered toward the hangar. A pony cart loaded with gasoline drums had been driven up beside the reception platform. With slight satisfaction he noted that the wind sock hung limp; at least he would not have to allow for windage. He tightened his sight, gauging the range, and took one deliberate sight. Very gently he tested the action.

He did not let himself think ahead too far. Once he got away there were remote places in the desert where no one could find him—places with water and enough game to live on. Anything was better than slowly starving to death here.

He was about to slide his last shell into the chamber when a twig cracked again, nearer this time. He shook so violently the shell fell into the dirt. A hoarse voice called, "Pssst!"

Mitrov turned as a figure squirmed out of the dark. "*Slava Bogu,*" Niki gasped. "Are you all right?"

Mitrov's first sensation of relief gave way to swift and instant anger. "You," he hissed. "What do you want?"

Nicholas Rozhevki still wore his apron and his cheeks were streaked with dust and sweat. "He's a bad one, that Tungan," he panted. "I overheard your talk, so forgive me, *barin,* but I followed—"

"Never mind that. Go!"

"But you do not understand. That is what I come to tell you."

It came over Mitrov with startling abruptness how really little he knew of this stubborn, thick-witted fellow in spite of all their dealings. Never before had Niki disputed his authority and that he dared do so now only outraged Mitrov more. To be in debt to him was bad enough but this was intolerable. "Do you want to kill us both?" he growled.

"I believe as you do, *barin,* but this is not the way."

Mitrov stared. He found it strangely distasteful that Niki should display his beliefs, in fact that a man like Nicholas Rozhevki should have beliefs at all. Mitrov was about to kick him when the first all-but-imperceptible pulsation of engines came from the west.

"But they are Russians," Niki faltered.

Mitrov flung a wild glance over his shoulder. There was no sign of Aziz, no sound but a faint steady drone that filled the sky.

"If it is a question of money—" Niki wet his lips and hurried on. "—If it is money, *barin,* why—I will make you partner in the restaurant. You would not work of course; I will do all that. It is not much but—"

Something like incredulity was on Mitrov as he looked at Niki's solemn, frightened face. In his mind he saw the kitchen, the dishes and the natives who came to eat the greasy fare of Nicholas Rozhevki. For an instant everything else was submerged in his impulse to laugh.

Niki's mouth widened as though to scream, then flapped shut, loosely, like the mouth of a gaffed fish. Stupidly, without comprehension almost, Mitrov heard him gurgle. Niki made an effort to rise, gave one convulsive twitch and collapsed. Only then did Mitrov become aware of Aziz astride the body.

He avoided Aziz' eyes as long as he could. Because he was half dazed he managed to sound rather casual then. "That was unnecessary," he said.

"Yes, a mistake," Aziz said dryly. "I hope you will not make another."

"Sometimes I am careless."

Aziz came for him, the knife glittering in his hand. Before Mitrov could move he felt the blade cold against his neck as Aziz' free hand pinned him, holding him powerless. He waited, with the Tungan's breathing hot upon him, then he

said. "You won't because you need me."

"Very clever."

"If you were as good with the gun as you are with the knife you could do this job yourself," Mitrov heard himself saying.

Aziz shrugged and loosened his grip. "Remember," he said, "you can outlive your usefulness, Count Mitrov."

THE drone had become a deep throbbing roar overhead. Mitrov looked up as the plane swept across the field, invisible in camouflage except for the red and green wing tip lights. It banked and came back, throttling down into the artificial brightness, and the wheels touched, throwing up dust. The plane bounced and rolled to a stop.

Mitrov stretched prone and braced himself, digging in his toes. He took up the sling another notch. His nerves were steady, too steady, he thought, like taut wires. He had a last-minute apprehension that something had been left undone.

"Get ready."

With his naked eye Mitrov could distinguish a man in the brown of a Soviet officer standing on the wing edge. The officer waved and swung down, where he was surrounded by officials. Beyond, the cheering mob pushed against a cordon of troops.

"Shoot straight, my Czarist friend," Aziz said. "That's the General."

Mitrov knew that word should mean something to him, a great deal perhaps, but he had lost touch. It was easy to do in Turlik, easier than to remember. So often he had dreamed of an opportunity like this—visualized himself in such a role—and now that one had come it seemed unreal. "Is he worth so much then?" he asked.

His ignorance appeared to amuse Aziz. "Commander of the whole Far East. Their best strategist!"

Mistrov fitted the butt to his shoulder. The brand on the stock—the Imperial eagle of Russia—was rough against his cheek.

Across the field mechanics had begun to refuel the plane and the officials were moving toward the platform steps.

"With him gone," Aziz said, "our work will be simpler."

There was a gloating quality in his voice, a slight exhibitionism of which Mitrov had imagined him incapable. Seeing at last just who and what Aziz was, Mitrov considered the rumor that Russia and Japan were at war. Not that it mattered much, now that he had decided what to do, but it would be nice to know.

Squinting through his lens, Mitrov brought the cross hairs to bear on the brown tunic three hundred and seventy-five yards away. He saw the star cluster on the collar patch—the five stars of a full general. He calculated an allowance for the Remington's pull to the right, aware of the strain in him like pain.

From a dirty pouch Aziz counted off five one-thousand-dollar bills. "If you do as well as I hope, there will be five more."

"Now!" Aziz said.

Almost caressingly Mitrov increased the pressure on the trigger.

Afterward, Mitrov couldn't explain why his eye had wandered from its steady hold on the target. Perhaps it was the sudden move on the part of the man who stood beside the general—a motion that caused a glinting ray of light to be reflected from a decoration he wore on the left breast of his tunic. Unconsciously, Mitrov's sight went to that decoration—and remained there. It was a Russian decoration! Mitrov, too, had once worn that honor, having received it from the hands of the Czar himself!

"Now!" Aziz repeated threateningly.

Quick understanding came to Mitrov then. The high-ranking officer standing beside the Russian general was a member of the welcoming Chinese delegation—but was not a Chinese. He was a Russian—a White Russian, like Mitrov himself. Yet he led the Chinese against the common foe—and he didn't scorn to stand beside a Red general who fought for the preservation of his homeland.

With a sudden wrench, Mitrov threw himself sideways. Aziz swore and stabbed with his knife. The blade slashed Mitrov's coat grazing his shoulder, and buried itself in the dune. In that fraction of a pause, Mitrov was able to jerk free of his sling.

As the Tungan lunged, Mitrov swung his rifle. The butt struck Aziz' forehead, stunning him, and Mitrov clubbed again, savagely. Aziz collapsed and lay still.

Later when his strength had returned somewhat, Mitrov crawled over to Niki. A good many ideas were running through his mind, most of them confused, but for the first time in years he was not thinking entirely of himself. An ideal, vague as yet, had replaced his self-pity. If he had learned anything, and he thought he had, it was that Nicholas Rozhevki and he had one thing in common. Russia. No matter that they were both exiles; it was still their country, and nothing could ever take it from them.

There would be an alarm in the morning when the bodies were discovered, but by then Mitrov expected to be gone. He had been a soldier before and perhaps could be one again—with the Chinese. Thoughtfully, he unloaded the gun. It was one of the old hopes—revenge—one of the futile, foolish hopes that had helped sustain him, but the time for that had passed. In his country's present crisis there was no place for such mean, petty selfishness.

The engines of the plane had warmed up and the Russians were climbing aboard. Mitrov watched the ship as it took off, and after it had traveled beyond the field's faint illumination his eyes followed the red and green lights on the plane's wings until they, too, had disappeared. Then he turned and walked slowly back to his tethered horse.

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HEROES ARE MADE

By KEITH EDGAR

I make a flying leap for the handrails—miss—and get knocked clean across the station platform and into a big baggage truck.

ILLUSTRATED BY
JOSEPH A. FARREN

WHEN Bobby Burns wrote that piece about "Man's ingratitude to man," he knew what he was talking about. Well, maybe it was Shakespeare said it; the point is, I know all about ingratitude.

Take that last trip I made on eastbound Ninety Six. Didn't I, after having a narrow escape from death no less than three times, instead of breaking down like a lesser man would—didn't I, with desperate heroism and stubborn devotion to duty, make it possible for the munitions train to get through to the coast in time to catch its convoy?

So what happens? Do the newspapers

write *me* up as the hero? Does the president of the railroad write *me* a letter of congratulation and appreciation? Does the Elks Club give *me* a duck dinner? Let me tell you.

I been to the Trainmen's Ball with dark-haired Peggy McIntosh and didn't get to bed until about two A. M. As usual on such occasions, the phone rings about three A. M., and it's the call-boy telling me I'm ordered out on eastbound Ninety Six at four-thirty.

So, I get dressed and make myself a cup of coffee, being very quiet so as not to wake the rest of the house, and pack my basket. It's a frosty February night, or rather morning, and the cold keen air soon snaps the sleep out of me as I trudge through the light snow to the depot. At the yardmaster's office I sign out in the Brakemen's book; and learn that the conductor is dour, wizened old Graveyard Gorman and the other brakeman is Dusty Jones. With these two old-timers in the crew I know I got to ride the engine; so I go over to where the caboose is parked and stow my basket, get a few fusees, fill my lantern and light it, and go over to the roundhouse to find the engine.

My luck is out as far as congenial crews go. With them two clucks on the rear end, who is the engineer but Crazy McIntosh, the horse-faced stringbean, who I detest for his sarcastic tongue. He's Peggy's pa, and I shudder when I think that I might some day have him for a father-in-law. His fireman, of course, is Dirty Dolan, two hundred and twenty pounds of stupidity, a living example of the saying, "a strong back and a weak mind."

Well, we got No. 2648, a big powerful hog, and I climb up into the cab and say pleasantly, "Good morning, gents."

Crazy, who's cleaning his goggles, just looks at me and grunts, disappointed-like. Dirty Dolan don't even look up from laying his fire. I've made the run with these guys before so I ain't hurt, as a sensitive soul might be, by the lack of warmth in their welcome.

We move out of the roundhouse and switch over to the "waiting" track. In a few minutes Ninety Six, with Cannonball McGregor at the throttle, rolls in from Windsor after a very fast run. Their engine is cut off and switches over to the round-house. We back down to the train and I couple on while the wheel-tappers give the cars a quick going over.

I climb back up on the engine as Graveyard comes trotting up with the orders and hands them up to the hogger. Gandering over Crazy's shoulder I see that the dispatcher is giving us complete clearance and a clear track from St. Thomas right through to Niagara Falls.

Crazy looks down at Graveyard and hollers, "They must be in a hurry for this stuff!"

"It's munitions!" croaks Graveyard. "We got to catch a convoy!" Then he screeches, "Well! What in blazes are you waiting for?"

Crazy bellows, "I'm waiting for you to drag your senile old bones back to the crummy! I'm gonna pull out of town fast!"

"Get goin'—get goin'," squawks Graveyard, hopping around like a worried hen.

Crazy pulls out his plug, bites off a chaw, shifts the cud into one corner of his mouth. Then he stands up, throws the Johnson bar back into reverse, throws off the air and yanks the throttle. The engine jerks, the drivers spin, and we shoot backwards about five car-lengths, piling enough slack into the train to start us three or four times.

Graveyard comes running back and hollers up at us, "Where the hell you goin'? Westbound to Windsor?"

CRAZY leers at him, throws the Johnson bar forward, turns on the sand and eases back the throttle. The big hog leaps forward as the drivers grab on the sand. He hooks the throttle back farther and the exhaust thunders loud and fast as we roll out of town with that heavy train like you'd think we had a passenger run.

I hear a guffaw from Crazy, so I go to the gangway and look back in time to see Graveyard's lantern going up the side of a box-car about twenty-five cars back. He wasn't taking any chances on grabbing the caboose at the speed we were starting to roll.

Crazy is braying, "Haw! Haw! Haw!

That'll teach the old coot to tell me my business!" By golly, I think, if I marry Peggy, we'll have to live at least a hundred miles away from that old buzzard. If he is mean enough to make Graveyard walk over the top of a train in winter, I don't want no part of him.

I climb up in my seat and settle down. I love these night runs, with the deep-throated bark of the exhaust going, "chung-a-chung-a-chung-a-chung" in racy tempo and the engine pitching and rocking in time to it; with the hiss of the compressed air treadle and the clang of the coal scoop making an obbligato as Dirty Dolan keeps her hot. The headlight bores a brilliant tunnel through the dark, the telegraph poles flit by like ghostly pickets, and the shriek of our whistle rends the night apart as we roar down on Aylmer, through Tilsonburg, over the long trestle and past sleeping Delhi; taking Courtland and Nixon in our stride, with Crazy McIntosh living up to his nickname and pounding her over the rails with mad, reckless speed. The Johnson bar's riding in the company notch, the throttle arm is against the back of the quadrant, and old 2648 is thudding fast and furious like the hoof-beats of a galloping horse.

I get to thinking about how romantic it is to be working on the railroad. Here we are, hurtling through the night with eighty-five carloads of guns and tanks and shells and heaven knows what; and several hundred miles ahead of us is a convoy waiting for this load to rush it across the ocean to our troops. Every mile we put behind us means that much less time they got to wait for these desperately needed supplies.

I look over at Crazy McIntosh, hunched over in his seat, one hand gripping the throttle, head and shoulders leaning out into the winter night, his jaws thoughtfully shifting his quid around as he peers steadily through his goggles at the track ahead. I wonder if he ever thought his job was romantic.

As for Dirty Dolan, steadily swinging his scoop, he has nothing to think with.

There's no sign of dawn yet when we roll down the long grade into Simcoe, where we have to stop and take water. Since there is a bad hill going up out of town, we will stop the train on the down grade, park it there, uncouple and go down to the watertank. The idea is, when we get our water, to back up and couple on the train again; and then we can get a run at that other hill.

WHEN the train slides to a standstill I drop down, run back to the rear of the tender, lift the pin, cut off the air, break the hose and climb onto the footplate. I give my lantern a twirl and Crazy coasts her down to the water spout by the depot. I head for the office for fresh orders, noticing that Crazy is already going over the main bearings on the drivers with his torch and long-spouted oilcan.

It's snug and warm in the station. I stroll into the operator's office, set my lantern on his desk and listen to him announcing our arrival to the dispatcher. He is talking into the phone in a singsong voice, "Eastbound Ninety Six, engine twenty-six forty-eight, arrived Simcoe, six-fourteen, that is all."

Then he picks up a pencil, adjusts his headphone, says out of the corner of his mouth, "Clearance for you," and starts writing on the flimsy-pad.

There is a toot from the engine. He has his water and wants to know: am I coming? I hold my lantern up to the window and move it in a circle. He gives three toots in reply, signifying that he will back up and couple on.

In a minute or so I get the orders and walk out onto the platform, to give the engineer the high-ball. I raise my lantern the full height of my arm, twirl it with a quick wrist motion, bring it down again and repeat. The engine replies with a 'toot-toot' and I hear her exhaust start to pound.

Wandering back into the friendly warmth of the station, I meet the startled eyes of the operator. "Hey," he says, "you better go back up the line and get on."

Well, I *know* I should, but it's so nice and cozy in the station. "Oh, I'll catch her when she goes by."

"I gotta see this," says he grimly, reaching for his hat and lantern and following me out onto the platform.

By golly, Ninety Six is roaring down like a bat out of hell. I guess I *should* have gone up the line to meet her. Well, it's too late now. I slide the orders into my gauntlet, hook the lantern securely over my arm and get set.

Here she comes—a swaying, bellowing, one-eyed monster, thundering out of the night straight at me. I make a flying leap for the handrails—miss—hit the tender and get knocked clean across the station platform into a baggage truck. I get a fleeting impression, as I slam against the truck, of Crazy McIntosh and Dirty Dolan leaning out of the cab grinning like Cheshire cats as they roar past.

The wind is knocked out of me, but I'm not hurt on account of my heavy mackinaw and overalls. I get groggily to my feet and make a grab at about the tenth car as it rattles through the station. Again I miss and get knocked across the platform.

The operator helps me to my feet and roars, "You bloody fool! Light your lantern and wait till he slows down!"

That's right, my lantern's gone out, hasn't it? I dazedly fumble around lighting it and at the same time trying to get my wind back.

Suddenly I notice that the cars are only going by at about twenty miles an hour now. The grade is slowing the train up. I get set, jump and grab the third ladder-rung on a box-car. My feet whip out from under me and I swing them back and clamp them onto the bottom rung. I've made it.

Climbing up to the roof and making my way over the top of those bouncing, swaying cars, I get to thinking about those two apes up ahead laughing at me when I got thrown. It makes me so darn mad I forget about the overhead bridge we are coming to.

THE warning ropes whip into my face and fear stabs me as I throw myself back and down—flat on the car. I can almost hear the scrunch of my body being knocked down onto the roadbed. I fairly sob with relief as the bridge slides darkly past a few inches over my head. I sit up, find my lantern is out again and have a devil of a job lighting it up there in the wind.

Finally I get shakily to my feet, and start once more over the train to the engine. My knees are kinda wobbly and I'm a long time getting there.

When, at long last, I scramble over the tender down into the cab, there's Dirty Dolan grinning at me, the damn clown; and Crazy McIntosh hollers, "Here's the acrobat! Say Bub—you're some performer, you are!"

I give him the orders, tell him who his ancestors are and where he can go, and collapse onto my seat.

My nerves are kinda jangled and I'm darn glad to be able to sit down and relax. The steady pulsating beat of the exhaust and the rhythmic rocking of the engine have a soothing effect and it isn't long before I am all right again. I begin to feel hungry and my mouth waters when I think of the bacon and eggs and mince pie I got in my basket back in the caboose. Well, it won't do me any good till we get to Niagara Falls, which will be at least another hour and a half.

Dirty Dolan gets hungry too, and digs his lunch-box out of the locker under his seat. I get down and grab the scoop to fire the hog so's he can sit down for a few minutes and eat. Out of the corner of my eye as I slug coal into her, I see Dolan stuffing his face with sandwiches and cake and washing it down with tea from a vacuum bottle. Gosh, I feel awful empty.

Finally, Dirty Dolan sighs, wipes his mouth with the sleeve of his overalls, climbs down and grinningly offers me a sandwich. Do I refuse it? It is no sissy sandwich either, but two slabs of rye bread with a half-inch thick slice of cheese in between. By the time I have put it away I'm feeling considerably more comfortable.

Crazy McIntosh takes the Cayuga hill in a manner all his own. He just ignores it. We go booming down the grade wide open. Crazy doesn't touch the air or the throttle. I get a bit scared and look sharply at him to see if he is asleep, but his quid is moving thoughtfully up and down in his cheek. As our momentum builds up, 2648 begins to rock alarm-

ingly, and when we hit the trestle at the bottom I'm thinking every roll will be the last. It's a dizzy feeling to sit up in the high cab, feel her rock over and to look down—down—down to the dark river two hundred feet below.

In an instant we have catapulted over the bridge and thunder up the long hill on the other side like it isn't there at all. I wipe the cold sweat off my forehead and thank my stars that there ain't no more hills ahead of us.

It's starting to show a dull, murky daylight when we thunder through Nelles Corners with the whistle shrieking like a lost soul. I look at my watch and am surprised at the time we are making. Only twenty-seven miles to the Falls and it's just seven-forty A.M. Well, Crazy never was a man to stop and pick daisies.

There is a tremendous loud *WHAM!* and the cab is suddenly full of steam, pouring in on the engineer's side. I think for one paralyzing moment that the boiler has burst, but am slightly reassured by the terrible profanity pouring over to my side with the steam. It is flowing in so thick I can't see more than a few inches. I feel my way over to the other side of the cab. Crazy is gone! We are still rocketing along at terrific speed. Where's Dolan? What has happened? Should I throw on the air?

A stream of language pours in from the catwalk along the boiler, and I know Crazy is climbing back into the cab. He bellows, Hey! Dolan! Where the hell are ye?"

"Here!" booms a voice about three inches from my ear, almost giving me heart failure.

"We've blown off a cylinder head!" hollers Crazy. "Bring the big wrench and come out on the pilot! . . . Hey! Bub!"

"What do you want?" I shouts.

"KEEP her hot and rollin'!" squawks Crazy McIntosh, and he disappears again.

Dirty Dolan shoves the scoop into my hand and is gone—like one of those spooks you read about. One second he's there and the next second he just ain't.

The vapor is so thick in the cab that I can't even see the steam gauge but the train is slowing down and I figure I better see what I can do. I hook the fire-doors open so the glare from the fire will pierce the steam a little and start swinging coal into her as hard as I can. It's a discouraging job because I know that as fast as I make steam it pours right out through the burst cylinder and back into the cab.

All at once the flow of steam stops and miraculously the cab is instantly clear. I jump to the engineer's seat and look out ahead, and the sight I see I'll never forget it to my dying day.

There is Crazy McIntosh lying on the cat-walk and Dirty Dolan sitting on his legs, with one hand hooked through the hand rail and the other gripping the hogger's collar.

And Crazy—he's leaning away out over those thrashing, whirling connecting rods and valve shafts and drivers on that swaying, pitching engine, calmly tightening the cut-off valve on the cylinder with a big wrench! When I realize that he has worked like that in a blinding cloud of steam—well, it beats me!

I go back to slugging coal and soon get the pressure up again. In a few minutes Dirty Dolan and Crazy McIntosh climb calmly back into the cab, like they've been out polishing the brass or something. Crazy spits out his quid and bites off a fresh chew and things go back to normal except that the engine has a lop-sided gait due to running on only one cylinder. I don't see how in blazes we can pull a heavy train on one piston, but Crazy drops the Johnson bar down a little and we keep right on going at about twenty-five miles an hour.

Crazy calls me over to his side of the cab. "Listen, Bub, this train's gotta go through, see? An' if we slow down below ten miles an hour we'll stop, see? And if we stop, we can't start again on one cylinder. The piston won't throw over dead centre—get it?"

"Yah, I get it," says I.

Crazy pauses to expectorate at a whistle post that rocks past, misses, and yanks the cord—two long and two short. After we have shot over the crossing he pulls his head in and turns to me

again. "When we come to the Y at Welland Junction you gotta get off an' run like hell ahead of us and get the switches open, see? I'll hold her just over ten miles an hour, an' the rest is up to you, see? Kin you do it, Bub?"

"Sure," say I dubiously.

Maybe I'd better explain about the Y. You see, our main line runs east right through to Fort Erie and Buffalo, going on to New York. But this train is routed via Niagara Falls to Boston. So, at Welland Junction we switch over to a north-bound track going to the Falls. I have to turn two cross-over switches carrying us onto the Y, which is a curved track about a quarter-mile long running into the north-south line. Here are two more cross-over switches which finally put us on the north-bound track to Niagara Falls. There's nothing complicated about it except that it's a nuisance to stop the train twice while the brakeman turns the switches. Only this time we ain't going to stop—we hope.

Well, it's daylight now, and at least I don't have to lug a lantern with me. As we pull up to the junction, the hogger slows the train down and I go out the cat-walk and down onto the footplate of the pilot.

WHEN we're about fifty yards from the first switch I jump down and run like the devil is behind me. My switch key is in my hand with its thong around my wrist so I can't drop it.

I reach the switch, shove my key into the padlock, turn it, unhook the padlock, throw the arm up—over—and down, snap on the padlock and gallop for the next switch.

Number 2648 is chugging right behind me and I just get the arm of the other switch down a split second before the wheels of the pilot truck rumble over the points and the big hog thunders past.

As she goes by, I swing up into the cab, rest a moment to get my breath, and go out on the catwalk again and down to the pilot.

When we're halfway around the Y, I jump down—step on some ice—and go flat on my face! It knocks me dizzy.

I scramble up, and as the cab is just rolling by me, I swing onto the step to gasp for breath and stop the whirling in my head. Just then Dirty Dolan looks out, sees me, and hollers, "Hey! You better start runnin'."

I curse him, jump down and spurt grimly ahead, past the engine, going "chug-chug-chug," and put everything I've got into getting to that switch in time to turn it. It's hard to run in bulky overalls and heavy boots, and every few yards I'd slip on some ice and nearly take a header.

The blood is roaring in my ears as I throw myself on the switch, fairly tear the padlock off (it isn't locked, praises be!) and throw the points over right under the pilot flanges.

I'm staggering now and I *know* I can't get to that last switch in time, but I try it anyway. It's about twenty-five yards ahead, and as I run I hear the engine thudding just behind me. I realize that Crazy McIntosh, being on the other side of the engine and also on the outside of the curve, can't see me. Thinking I'm doing all right, he's coming right on. If I don't make it, the engine will be derailed and probably roll over on top of me. Nice situation—huh?

I put on a last desperate spurt. If the switch is locked—I'm just licked, that's all. I hurl myself the last ten feet to the switch—the padlock is open—I yank it off, swing the arm up and over, with the engine right on top of me. For one long, awful second, I don't know whether the pilot wheels went *inside* or *outside* the switch-joints. Then I hear the exhaust bellow stridently as Crazy McIntosh pulls the throttle back—and I know I've done the trick.

But—it's a high switch, stiff with cold grease, and I just haven't got enough strength left to pull the arm down again. I just stand there, throwing my weight on the arm to keep it over, while the train rumbles slowly past. I'm afraid to let go for fear the points will spring back and derail the train. I'm so badly winded I can hardly stand up and for an agonized hundred years or so I watch the cars go by with exasperating slowness, while I hang on to that switch arm with the clutch of death itself.

Finally the caboose swings in sight. I give a convulsive heave and get the arm down, hook on the padlock and swing up onto the rear platform of the crummy as she rattles by.

I collapse on the steps, thinking, "Aw, to hell with going over the train to the engine again. We're nearly in, and Dirty Dolan can cut the engine off when we pull into the yards."

I get up, wearily open the door and lurch into the warmth. There is Graveyard and Dusty sitting at the table stuffing their gizzards with ham and eggs and coffee.

GRAVEYARD looks up and squawks, "Say! You're supposed to be on the injin!"

"Too monotonous up there," says I, peeling off my mackinaw and sniffing the coffee.

It isn't long before I am restoring my depleted strength with bacon and eggs and fried potatoes and strong coffee. I tell Graveyard about blowing off a cylinder head but he cackles and says I am mistaken because no 'injin' can run on one piston.

We do a quick-around at Niagara Falls and make a leisurely trip back to St. Thomas with a string of empties and, of course, a different engine.

When I go into the yard office to sign off, the yardmaster tells me that I'm wanted up on the 'carpet'—superintendent's office.

Crossing over to the depot, I climb the stairs and go into the anteroom, feeling awfully dirty and ungainly and wishing that I had at least taken off my overalls. A stenographer waves me to a chair and I sit down wondering what in blazes I'm wanted for.

The door into the inner sanctum is partly open and, so help me, there is Crazy McIntosh and Dirty Dolan standing in front of the Super's desk like a couple of kids caught playing hookey. They are just as they came off the engine, smudged and greasy, Crazy with his denim cap on backwards, goggles shoved up on his forehead, a big bulge in his grimy cheek, wiping his hands absently with a hunk of cotton waste as he rolls his eyes in an unsuccessful search for a cuspidor. Dirty Dolan is turning his cap nervously in his big hands and has a lugubrious expression on that stupid pan of his.

I hear Scotty Leyland's deep voice rumbling at them and darned if he isn't congratulating them on their performance and telling them he is going to see that it gets to the attention of the president of the railroad. As he goes on and on, telling those two goofs what fine fellows they are, I realize why I am here. Being the *real* hero of the episode, he has probably something special in mind for me. Maybe he is going to assign me to a regular run. Well, it's nice to work on a division where your efforts are really appreciated.

Finally Crazy McIntosh and Dirty Dolan pussyfoot out trying to look modest; and when they see me, instead of heading down the stairs, they get awfully interested in some pictures on the wall.

Well, it won't hurt to have Peggy's old man go home and tell her how the Super praised me to my face, so, to oblige them, I leave the door open when I go into Scotty's office.

I march briskly up to his desk, remove my cap with a gentlemanly gesture, and say heartily but respectfully, "Good afternoon, sir, did you request to see me?"

Scotty looks at me grimly. (A rough diamond.) Then he barks, "Damn it! I ought to fire you! What the devil do you mean, trying to get on an engine going fifty miles an hour? Haven't you any brains at all?"

IF YOUR COPY OF THIS MAGAZINE IS LATE—

We regret that, due to the difficulties of wartime transportation, your magazine may sometimes be a little late in reaching you. If this should happen, your patience will be appreciated. Please do not write complaining of the delay It occurs after the magazine leaves our offices and is caused by conditions beyond our control.—*The Publishers.*

The gunfire came in rolling waves, broken only by the shrieking of men and the screams of terrified horses.

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES DYE

SIX WEEKS SOUTH OF TEXAS

By LESLIE T. WHITE

Synopsis

AFTER six weeks and more than five thousand miles of weary travel, RANDY DENT of Texas arrives at Bôa Vista, Brazil, with a precious cargo of seven prize Hereford bulls. He is to deliver them there to PEDRO BARBOSA, wealthy cattleman, and receive in payment $25,000 in gold—twenty for JIM HANLEY, his boss back in Texas; five for himself. But Barbosa

is nowhere to be found. Finally, in response to Randy's inquiries at a saloon, a huge-bellied, one-eyed man steps forward, introduces himself as MANOEL SILVA and leads the Texan to a back room where, stretched on the floor, lies the bullet-riddled body of Barbosa. But the fat man denies any knowledge of the cattleman's murder.

Determined to get the bulls to Barbosa's great *fazenda* in Paradise Valley, some 150 miles south of Boa Vista, and try to collect his money, Randy hires Manoel for fifty dollars as his guide. Next morning, Manoel turns up with two trucks and a pair of native helpers, the bulls are loaded into the trucks and they begin the journey.

On the way they hear tales of a fierce bandit, "The Beast of the Seven Heads," who is terrorizing the south Mato Grosso —and the two natives desert the party, taking with them the ignition keys of the trucks. Manoel bullies a pair of horses out of a shopkeeper, and they drive the bulls on. They are still some distance from Barbosa's ranch when they come to a river teeming with *piranhas*, deadly flesh-eating fish. The resourceful Manoel finds an ancient cow, drives it into the river to distract the *piranhas* and Randy gets the yearlings across safely. Then the fat man suggests a short cut —"if the *senhor* have the nerve"—across the ranch of NESTOR FIGUEREIDO, whose land adjoins that of Barbosa.

When they come onto Figuereido's *fazenda,* a herd of wild cattle suddenly breaks across their trail, stampeding Randy's bulls—and a moment later three riders appear, heading in their direction. To Randy's astonishment, Manoel shouts one warning, wheels his horse and flees. But the Texan, sure that the

stampede was deliberate, gallops furiously at the riders, bowling their leader off his horse. In the ensuing fight, Randy knocks out his man—and turns to find a black-eyed girl glaring angrily at him. He learns that his antagonist is Nestor Figuereido; the girl, his sister MARIANA. At gunpoint Randy forces Figuereido and his men to round up the yearlings and drive them to Barbosa's ranch. Here he meets BENTO HERMANNY, a tall arrogant man who introduces himself as Barbosa's partner. Hermanny expresses deep regret at Barbosa's mysterious death—but he gladly accepts the bulls. He shows Randy around the huge ranch, and Randy tells him of Manoel and of the fat man's sudden flight. Hermanny identifies Manoel, himself, as "The Beast of the Seven Heads." He is sure that Manoel is also Barbosa's killer.

Next day, Hermanny describes in glowing terms the great future of Paradise Valley. The day of the small ranch, he maintains, is done. And he ends by offering the Texan a job as his *capitaz* or head man, promising to make him rich some day. But Randy, eager to get back home to Texas, refuses. That night, while Hermanny's men are searching the countryside for Manoel, the bandit boldly turns up at Randy's quarters. He has come, he says, for his fifty dollars—but he warns Randy not to believe all he hears. Randy gives him the money and hurries him off.

The following morning, Randy rides away from the *fazenda,* his money-belt loaded with 500 *contos de reis*—approximately $25,000 American. He is accompanied by EDUARDO VALEZ, Hermanny's foreman, who is to guide him back to the railroad. They make camp that night, and as they squat by the fire an unseen assailant shoots at them—killing the Brazilian and wounding Randy. When the Texan regains consciousness, the money-belt is gone!

PART II

FRANTICALLY, Randy pawed over the saddle in search of the rest of his money. The bag, too, was gone! Half sobbing, he collapsed on the ground and would have given himself back to the sweet narcotic of oblivion, but for the red ants. Their bite was not a steady thing, but a series of vibrating shocks that jolted him conscious every time he began to slide under. At last he could take no more of it, so he dragged his fiery body down to the stream where he had watered the horses the previous night, and slid into the cool, shallow stream.

When the ants left him, he propped his head on a rock and just lay quiet in the water, trying to reason out what had happened. In retrospect, it seemed that Eduardo must have had some premonition of trouble. His alertness might have been caused by the ever-present dangers in a region infested by bandits, but his brooding sullenness must have been based on more than that. Yet as Randy thought about it, Eduardo had been friendly enough with him toward the end. Looking up, he saw three more black vultures wheeling out of the sky toward the grove. He shuddered. Eduardo would never be able to explain now.

A sudden sound behind brought Randy alert. Turning his head, he saw a horse watching him warily. It was the big sorrel gelding Eduardo had ridden the previous day. The horse was plainly nervous. Apparently he had been badly frightened. He had broken his rope and one end dangled from the halter. He was spotted with sweat.

Randy lay perfectly motionless. The gelding advanced a few steps and froze again. After a long pause, the horse advanced a little closer. Relaxed, Randy could have remained quiet indefinitely, but now tension bunched his nerves until he wanted to cry out. He forced himself to wait. If the gelding ran away, he was through. God only knew what sort of reception he would get if he crawled into a strange ranch house in his present condition. The black *urubus,* having feasted on Eduardo, were now eyeing Randy with their baleful stares.

At last the gelding decided, apparently, that Randy's head was merely a harmless, red-stained rock. He trotted down to the stream and waded out within six feet of where Randy was lying. He drank deeply, whinnied, and then, to

Randy's disappointment, turned away from him.

Randy thought of calling to the horse, but a voice from the face of the water could only scare the brute, and he was nervous enough as it was. Nor was there any chance that Randy could overtake him.

Sure that the horse could not for the moment see him, Randy felt around on the creek bottom till he found a small rock. Then, gingerly, he raised his right hand out of the water. He kept his eyes frozen on the horse. When the gelding bent his head again to drink, Randy heaved the rock with an underhand swing.

The rock went over the horse and fell with a loud splash a little in front of him. He neighed in terror and wheeled, moving upstream toward Randy. The Texan was ready. As the big gelding plowed past, he made a grab for the trailing rope—and caught it.

"Whoa, boy! Whoa!" Randy placated the startled horse. "Easy now, easy!"

The gelding plunged and heaved, and Randy's arms felt as if they were being torn from their sockets. But just when he thought he would have to let go, the big horse stopped his plunging and stood trembling. Randy leaned against him and trembled, too. Finally he dragged himself over to a rock, and after several fruitless attempts managed to mount.

He guided the gelding back to the grove of trees in order to recover his saddle. But by the time they got there, he was too weak to dismount and go through the motions. His leg had stiffened until any movement at all was sheer agony. As he turned the horse toward the body of Eduardo, the *urubus* lumbered away protestingly. The sight nauseated Randy, and with an oath, he prodded the horse with his heel and gave him his head.

That day was a nightmare to Randy Dent. Only sheer instinct kept him mounted. From the seemingly jerky course of the sun across the heavens, he surmised that he must have fainted several times. Perhaps the horse sensed his plight, for the big fellow took it easy. Had he stumbled or reared suddenly at any time, Randy would have toppled helpless to the ground. He didn't remember the sunset. One minute the heat was beating remorselessly, the next they were moving through utter blackness. Once a hunting *tigre* screamed close by, and Randy bunched his muscles, expecting the horse to bolt. But for a slight shivering, the gelding maintained his poise. Randy decided he had never loved anything quite so much as that big sorrel.

Things became hazy after that. He vaguely sensed they were climbing a hill. He heard dogs barking, then lights began to wink around him. Men shouted. The gelding came to a halt. Randy reached forward to pat the arched neck, and then he began to fall . . . .

CHAPTER VI

THE SHADOW OF TEXAS

THE SUN was streaming through the windows when Randy opened his eyes. He stared about, trying to figure where he was. The small, white-walled room was strange, and viewed through his mosquito bar, appeared peculiarly unreal. He was in a bed, his wounded leg carefully bandaged. Otherwise he was naked, save for the single blanket over his body.

A shadow cut across the open door, and a large woman entered. For a long minute she stared at him with apparent indifference. Randy stared back, trying to place her in his memory. There was something vaguely familiar about her, yet he was quite certain he had never seen her before. Above her shapeless body, she had a dark, round face, like a worn football. Her eyes were large, and bright and questing. Her expression was neither friendly, nor hostile. It was as though she had not yet made up her mind about him.

"Hello!" Randy croaked in Spanish. "Where am I?"

She turned abruptly and waddled out of the room, her bare feet making no sound. Randy watched her shadow disappear, then he sank back against the pillow. He began experimenting with his joints. His wounded leg was so se-

curely bound, he couldn't tell much about it. The pain had gone, but it ached dully. The rest of him, he decided, was just sore.

A few minutes later, Bento Hermanny strode into the room. He stood at the foot of the bed, staring down at Randy, then smiled grimly.

"Teresa told me you had awakened at last," he said. "How do you feel?"

"Terrible! I didn't know where I was."

Hermanny kicked a chair into place near the head of the bed and sat down.

"The dogs set up a clamor about one o'clock this morning. We rushed out and found you on the ground in front of Eduardo's horse. You can imagine what

"Passo Macoca—*The Pass of the Monkeys,*" *Cristino explained.* . . .

speculations went on. What happened? Where is Eduardo? And . . ."

Randy exhaled wearily. "Eduardo is dead!"

Hermanny's eyes went bleak. "Dead? Eduardo?"

Painfully, Randy explained what had happened. When he had concluded, Hermanny sprang to his feet and began to pace the tiny room. His cold rage was a terrifying thing, but somehow satisfying to Randy.

"And your money?" Hermanny demanded.

"The money," Randy said bitterly, "was stolen!"

"*Que coisa danada!*" raged the *fazendeiro.* "What a damned thing! How could the Beast have known?"

"What Beast?"

"That Manoel!" roared Hermanny. "Who else? He crossed the river the night before last, but how he could have known you were traveling back, I cannot understand! I was careful that nobody here should learn of your plans!"

Randy closed his eyes and his jaw tightened. How could Manoel have known, indeed! The blood crept into his face as he remembered the scene in his room, with Manoel stretched so blandly on his bed. How smoothly the dirty, one-eyed thief had inveigled him into divulging his plans to leave. He opened his eyes and looked at Hermanny. No, he hadn't the gall to admit his blunder to the *fazendeiro.*

"I would rather have lost those seven bulls than Eduardo!" fumed Hermanny. "He was too soft with these thieving swine, but he was an honest man!" He glared at Randy as if the Texan were, in some way, to blame.

For his own part, Randy felt guilty. His anger was a slow thing, but it was building up now. It did appear that by his naiveté, he had unwittingly set the trap which had resulted in Eduardo's death, to say nothing of the loss of the money. It was difficult now to think of that money objectively. Too much had

depended on it. Jim Hanley's warning came back to him again: *Folks hereabout say I'm crazy to trust you, boy, but I don't need to tell you what that money means to me at this time, so I know you won't let me down!* Well, Randy was ready to admit, he *had* let Hanley down—hard.

He reared up on his elbows. "Look—about this Manoel? Where does he hang out?"

Hermanny stopped his pacing and laughed harshly. He made a sweeping circle with his arm. "Where?" he jeered. "Where do the *urubus* hang out while waiting for carrion? Who can tell? Only when there is something to pluck do the vultures appear. The winged ones, and this Manoel! Bah! They are of the same breed!"

"What would he do with twenty-five thousand dollars? Would he spend it?"

"Ah-h!" snorted the *fazendeiro*. "How could he spend that much money in this accursed country? He will bury it somewhere like the animal he is until we make it too hot for him, and he is ready to leave the country. Or else he will keep it to ransom his freedom, should we catch him. Oh, I tell you, that Manoel is wily. Not without reason was he named *O Bicho das Sete Cabecas*—the Beast of the Seven Heads!"

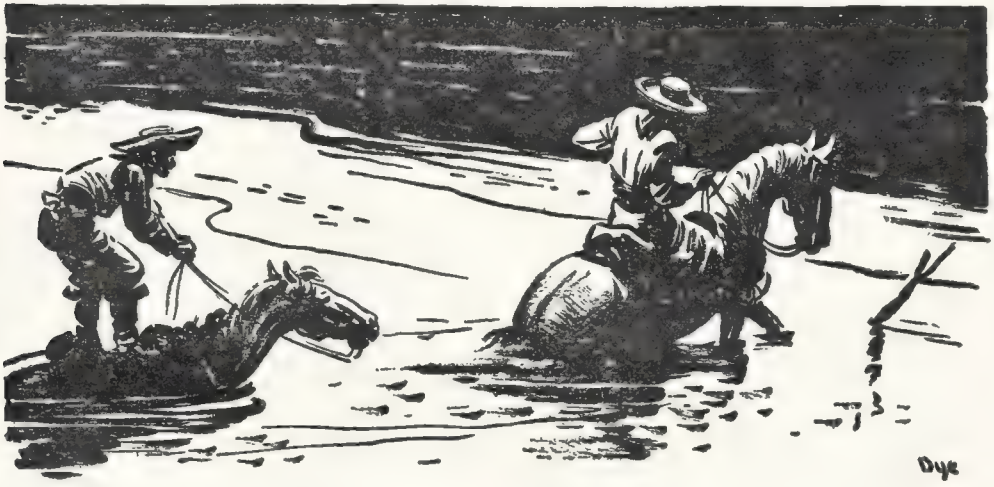
Randy sank back against his pillow. He couldn't go back to Texas and Jim Hanley without the money, and he was flat broke. His only hope of redeeming himself lay in recovering that money.

"Yesterday," he said slowly, "you offered me a job, *Senhor* Hermanny. Is it still open?"

Hermanny stopped his furious pacing and studied the Texan with cold metallic eyes. "In the Paradise there is no room for sentiment," he growled. "A man must be ruthless."

Randy returned his stare. "I've learned my lesson," he said.

Hermanny hesitated only a moment longer. "It is settled," he agreed brusquely. "You will hurry quick and get well."



. . . They forded the river in single file in the moonlight.

DESPITE his stewing and restlessness, the Gargantuan Teresa kept Randy in his bed for the better part of a week. He found that the soft-nosed rifle bullet had played havoc with his leg muscles. But the native woman treated the wound with a poultice of herbs and thick mud that killed the infection and drew out the soreness. She seldom spoke, and then only in the form of grunts, and she handled him as if he were an infant. Daily she bathed him and massaged his leg with a vile-smelling concoction that somehow kept it pliable.

There was something about her manner toward him that reminded Randy of

Eduardo. It wasn't hostility, nor even resentment. It was more a restrained form of disapproval. Certainly no one could have given him better care, yet he felt she would have been glad to see him go. Well, he had a bill to collect and a debt to pay before he pulled out, whether the fat Teresa and her kind disapproved or not.

By the end of the week, he was able to get out of bed. Two days more, and he was in the saddle. True, he couldn't put his weight on his injured leg, and any exertion set it to throbbing. But the daily massaging smoothed the soreness away, and in the saddle he was conscious only of a slight stiffness.

It was Saturday afternoon when a lank, pock-marked man galloped a weary pony up to the big house and in a shrill querulous whine demanded to see Bento Hermanny. Randy was sunning himself beside the small corral at the time, and he noticed the rider only because of the man's excited voice and the savage way he handled his horse. The *fazendeiro* received the man at once and, about an hour later, sent for Randy. When the Texan limped into Hermanny's office, he found the pock-marked man perched like a buzzard on the edge of a chair.

Hermanny did not introduce them. "This one brings me information," he said in English. "Are you able to ride hard?"

Randy glanced at the man in the chair, then met Hermanny's steady gaze. "Yes," he said.

Hermanny spoke to the pock-marked man in a soft, sing-song language that Randy knew to be Guarani. The other was nervous at Randy's presence, for he kept darting sidelong glances at the Texan. He vomited out words that Hermanny received with grunts of satisfaction.

Finally the *fazendeiro* swung on Randy. "He tells us that this Manoel has crossed the river down at the *Passo Macoca*—the Pass of the Monkeys. Tonight he visits a woman there. Perhaps you can recover your money, *Senhor* Dent?"

"I'd like a crack at it," Randy said grimly.

"Good!" grunted the *fazendeiro*. He threw a handful of coins at the pock-marked man. To Randy he said: "Come, we will lay our plans. This time, Manoel must not escape!"

THEY RODE at dusk. Hermanny elected to remain at the ranch with the bulk of his men; he always feared that a trap might be set to lure him from the property so that it might be destroyed. So Randy Dent headed a villainous collection of six picked gunmen. He had never seen such a crew of prize scoundrels before, and he tried not to think too much about it. He felt like a huntsman with a half-dozen vicious dogs on a leash. They were all heavily armed; each man carried a carbine, a revolver, and a long-bladed knife.

Randy had one rider keep a hundred yards ahead so that they would not stumble into an ambush, and he posted another well behind to cover their flank. A slim, ferret-featured man named Cristino, who was foreman of this particular gang, he kept beside him to act as a guide.

"What time will we reach this settlement we seek?" he asked Cristino.

"Midnight," the man said.

Randy grunted, and in his mind reviewed Hermanny's instructions. Pock-face had said there would be only peaceful farmers and their families there—besides Manoel. For Manoel, it was said, traveled alone on his amorous adventures. Randy could well believe that, after his own experience with the one-eyed bandit. But Hermanny had cautioned against taking chances. He didn't trust Pock-face, or any of his informants, for that matter. And he insisted that Manoel be brought in dead. There was already a large price on the bandit's head, and Hermanny had raised the ante. In his bitterness, Randy had promised an additional thousand dollars to the riders if they could force Manoel to divulge the hiding place of his twenty-five thousand. The men had taken that with a smile; there were ways, Cristino promised, of making a man talk. Randy had no cause to worry.

They did not ride the roads, but kept to the fields. It had rained hard late

in the afternoon, and now as they rode across the lowlands fringing the jungle, Randy caught the rich, lush odors of long rotten vegetation disturbed in its elemental process of decay.

The moon came out briefly, and the riders bunched together. A short time later they entered a patch of *mato* where the gloom was deep. Unseen limbs whipped their faces, and thorns plucked their clothing. Randy was beginning to tire as the hours passed, and once when a heavy branch slammed him in the chest, he almost fell out of the saddle.

They came suddenly out of the forest to the river's edge.

"*Passo Macoca,*" Cristino explained in a sibilant whisper. "The Pass of the Monkeys."

"How much farther?"

Cristino held up one finger. "Less than a league."

They forded the river in single file. The native riders stood up on the saddle seats, but Randy was too weary to worry about getting wet. They clustered together on the other side of the bank, waiting for orders. They knew even better than he did what was to be done. He didn't want talk; he wanted only action. His main emotion was a smoldering hatred for the fat Manoel who had made such a fool of him.

"Remember," he growled at them. "I

The whole settlement was in an uproar. Sick with disappointment, Randy stumbled through the confusion.

want this Manoel alive until he tells me where my money is hidden."

Scurrying clouds obscured the moon. When they debouched from the bush along the water's edge, they walked their horses. This was hostile territory, for they were now in Paraguay where they had no right to be. They moved like dark ghosts across the fields, the soft earth muffling the hoof beats. Minutes later they topped a small crest, and in the valley beyond nestled a collection of houses.

Christino grinned, pointing. "There Manoel lies in the arms of his woman," he said. "*Puxa!* Will he be surprised!"

The men laughed, and made ribald remarks among themselves. Randy's irritation increased.

"Follow the plan!" he told them curtly, and as they split into pairs and moved off into the darkness to surround the place, he waited tensely with Cristino.

THE MOON came out briefly and washed the scene in a wan light. When it had slid behind a cloud again, Randy growled at his companion, and they struck off at a gallop.

He heard the screams and the bark of gunfire before he reached the first of the buildings. Lights began to appear in some of the houses. A hay stack burst into flames, despite the recent rain. Randy spurred his horse, his weariness forgotten. His only reaction was a consuming bitterness.

With Cristino, he galloped up to the largest house in the group and heaved himself out of the saddle. His game leg had stiffened, so that he hobbled forward as if it were wood, his gun in one hand, an electric torch in the other.

At first he thought the place was deserted, but when he kicked open an inside door, he discovered an old man crouched behind an overturned table.

"Get up!" Randy ordered. "Where's that Manoel—*O Bicho?*"

The old man was trembling so hard he couldn't stand erect. Cristino flanked him and kicked him into the center of the room.

"Speak, *caboclo!*" snarled Cristino. "Before we skin you alive!"

"*O Meu Deus!*" groaned the old man. "This one of whom you speak did not come. On my honor, *senhors* . . ."

"Honor! You swine!" shouted Cristino. "I'll cut your lying tongue loose!"

Randy turned away in disgust. "Oh, to hell with him!" he growled. "Let's shake the place down."

The old man had spoken the truth, he was sure. The man had been too terrified to lie. Sick with disappointment, Randy turned and limped out of the house. The whole settlement was in an uproar, and he stumbled through the confusion, going from house to house. The natives were crazed with fear, and Randy ignored them. Finally one of his riders caught his arm and gestured him into a cow shed. Randy followed and turned the white beam of his flash on the horror pinned to the wall.

It was Pock-face, the informer! He was spread-eagled to crossed beams, held up by knives driven through his palms. The stump of his severed tongue filled his mouth. His glazed eyes met Randy's sickened gaze as they had not been able to do in life.

"Manoel did this thing!" muttered the rider.

"Randy killed his light and staggered to the door. For a moment he braced himself against the wall, faint with repugnance. The tiny settlement was in flames now and an instant later, Cristino galloped up dragging the old man they had questioned behind his horse on a rope's end. The old man was dead.

Randy flared up. "What in hell did you kill him for!"

Cristino laughed. "The pig lied!"

"He didn't lie, you fool!" shouted Randy. "Manoel has been here and gone. He knew we had been tipped off! Look in this shed!"

Cristino rode his horse up to the entrance and threw a light inside.

"*Puxa!*" he exclaimed indifferently. "He is indeed dead!"

Randy dragged himself over to his own horse. "Get your men together," he ordered. "We're going home!"

As he swung around, he looked down again at the old man lying in the dust. He met Cristino's eyes.

"If you ever do a trick like that when

you ride with me," he grated, "I'll kill you! Savvy?"

Cristino met his stare, then grinned insolently. "I have my orders," he told Randy, and cantered away.

The need for caution was over now, so they galloped across the fields to the river. As they reached the ford, Randy looked back. The burning houses laid a red glow across the sky. He glared at Cristino's straight back, recalling his words: *I have my orders!* Randy's stomach turned over. Hunting down the one-eyed bandit was one thing; burning homes and killing helpless peasants was something else. He'd have an understanding with Bento Hermanny, and damn quick!

THEY took a different route home. Randy was too much disturbed to pay any attention to where they were going, and the country was all strange. His injured leg throbbed until it was agony to remain upright in the saddle. But worst of all was the slow realization of what he had let himself in for. Hermanny, he began to suspect, wasn't as much interested in helping him recover his money, or even in capturing the one-eyed Manoel, as he was in driving out the small farmers. He tried to regard it as something different, but he sensed it was the old Texas land wars all over again; only the setting was changed. The settlers were the natural enemies of the big cattlemen; one wanted the land to farm, the other wanted it as pasture for his herds. It was the old, old story. Change can only come about by conflict and violence when the interests of men overlap.

By the time the eastern horizon had grayed over with approaching dawn, Randy was riding in a stupor of weariness and confused thoughts. He was in the lead, riding stirrup to stirrup with the arrogant Cristino, when they emerged from a clump of *mato* and came face to face with Nestor Figuereido and two of his riders.

The meeting was a complete surprise to both groups, and for a moment they stopped short and stared at each other. Figuereido's lean face flushed with anger as he recognized the Texan. His hand started for his gun, but paused without drawing it when Randy made no move.

"Take it easy," the Texan said in Spanish. "We do not want trouble."

Hermanny's riders had eased up on either side of him until they made a quarter circle in front of Figuereido and his men. The excitement of the hunt was still on them, and they were ugly and quarrelsome. Figuereido was in a nasty spot, but if he felt any qualms, he failed to show it.

"You are on my land!" he snapped.

Randy glanced sideways at the leering Cristino. "Why is this?" he asked.

Cristino's eyes smoldered resentfully. "Ride the pig down!" he rasped, and straightened in his saddle.

"Hold it!" ordered Randy. To Figuereido, he said: "*Senhor*, I did not know this was your land. I am in charge, therefore the fault is mine. For it I apologize."

Figuereido covered his surprise with a scowl. "Then get off it quick!" he barked, and wheeled his horse.

Although he was watching Figuereido, as the man swung around, Randy glimpsed Cristino whip out his revolver. There was no time to shout a warning, and what Randy did then was done by pure instinct. He turned his horse sharply into Cristino's, and with the same movement swung his arm in a backhand slap that took the latter full across the mouth. The gun exploded harmlessly as it flew from Cristino's hand, and Cristino himself was swept from the saddle into the dust beneath Randy.

Cristino bleated an oath and jerked out his knife as he came to his feet. He paused when he found himself staring into the business end of Randy's gun.

"Drop that knife, and mount!" Randy warned. "Before I kill you!" He jockeyed his horse around so that none of the others flanked him.

Figuereido had stopped and was watching. Then he put spurs to his horse and cantered out of sight.

Cristino began to curse, but Randy stopped him. "You dirty back-biting rat!" Randy said coldly. "I'll have you fired when we get back!"

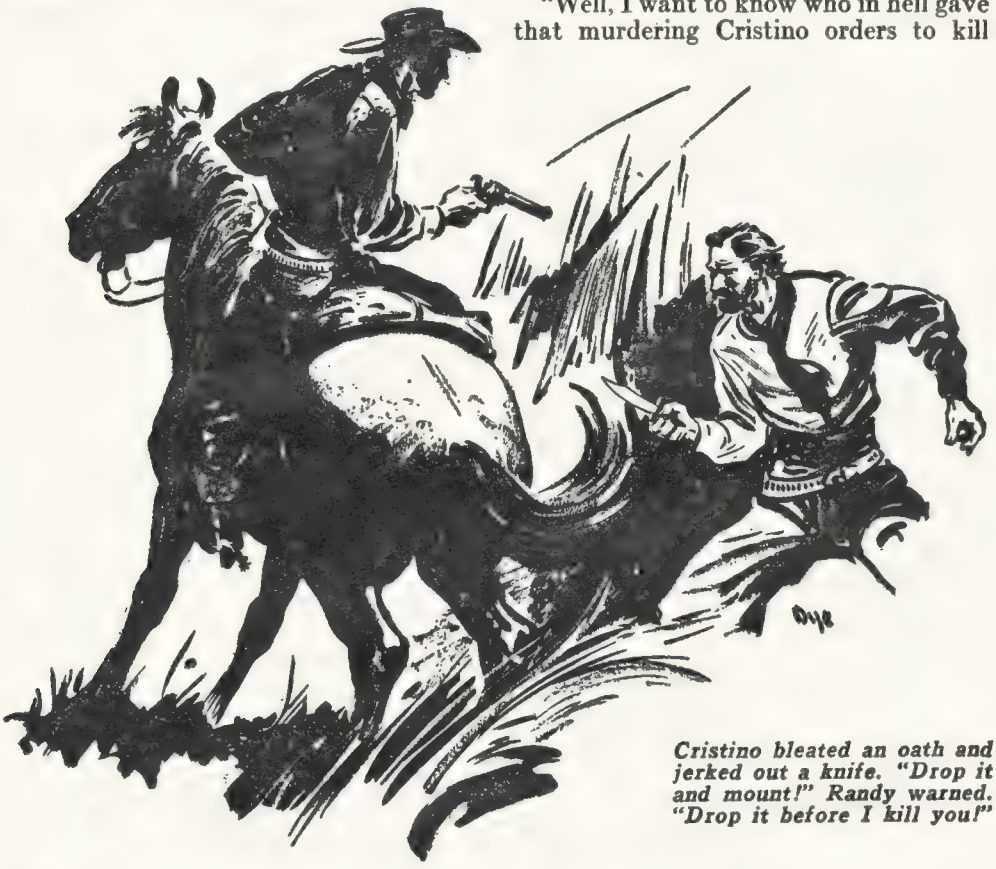
He kept Cristino covered and forced the man to empty the shells from his

gun. After that, he rode at the rear of the column until they reached the *fazenda*. He saw Cristino head for the main house in search of Hermanny, but he was too angry to care. He turned his horse over to one of the hands and limped into his own quarters.

Randy shook his head. "Don't beat around the bush," he growled. "You know only too damn well what happened!" His jaw tightened. "You gave me to understand I was in charge of that hunt!"

"Well?"

"Well, I want to know who in hell gave that murdering Cristino orders to kill a lot of innocent farmers and fire their settlement?"



Cristino bleated an oath and jerked out a knife. "Drop it and mount!" Randy warned. "Drop it before I kill you!"

WITHOUT taking off his clothes, Randy flung himself full length on the bed. He knew he should go in to see Hermanny, but his heart was pounding and his temper was so raw he decided to put it off until morning. But within twenty minutes, the fat Teresa waddled in to say that Bento Hermanny wanted to see him at once.

The *fazendeiro* was alone when Randy limped into his office. There was an awkward pause. Hermanny stood beside a table, frowning in preoccupation.

"I am impatient to learn what happened," he said at last.

Hermanny pursed his lips, then circled the table and sat down. "*Senhor* Dent, you told me you were a Texan. Is that true?"

"You know I am," Randy snapped.

Hermanny rocked back in his chair and hooked his thumbs in his belt. "I am familiar with the history of your Texas," he went on. "I know how you took what you wanted, like men; I know of the raids across your Rio Grande after thieving Mexican bandits. I always admired the courage, the ruthlessness, and the pioneering spirit of Texas."

"Look here," shouted Randy, "that's history. Those days are gone . . ."

"Perhaps for Texas, yes," interposed the *fazendeiro* coldly. "For us they are just starting." He slapped the table with the flat of his hand and his voice hardened. "This is war, *senhor!* You have enlisted on my side. There is no time for squeamishness. For you to strike one of your men when he seeks to do his duty, and to let an enemy insult you and get away with it—that is treason to me! Do I make myself clear?"

Randy began to tremble so that he had to lean his knuckles on the table to steady himself.

"I think you do," he managed bitterly. "You mean I should have killed Figuereido and his men when their backs were turned?"

"This is no place for pretty scruples, *senhor.*" Hermanny stood up and leaned across the table facing the Texan. "You were shot, beaten, and robbed. My best man was killed trying to help you. I have offered to assist you to recover your money. I gave you a job. You waste a lot of maudlin sympathy on my enemies. You permit them to insult you, and apologize in my name. You threaten to kill one of my men for doing what you are too squeamish to do. Now you stalk in here and tell me how to run my business. *Senhor* Dent, I have heard it said that North Americans are always critical of other peoples for doing what they themselves have found profitable. What am I to think now?"

Randy was taken aback. "But, good God, man! I didn't contract . . ." he began, but Hermanny cut him off with a wave of his hand.

"Enough. You are tired and worn. Go to your quarters and sleep it off. Tomorrow we will talk again. Perhaps you will see things more clearly then. Now go. *Bom dias, senhor.*"

Too enraged for further argument, Randy swung on his heel and stalked out. But as he crossed the quadrangle to his room, he knew that he did not need sleep to see things clearly. It was all too clear right now. Hermanny had hired him as a gunman, a killer. It had, as the *fazendeiro* pointed out, been done in Texas years ago; now Texas history was repeating itself in the Mato Grosso. *A gunman!* Randy shook his head. Not even for Jim Hanley, nor the twenty-five thousand dollars, nor his own reputation back home would he stay down here to pillage and murder poverty-stricken farmers. He had never before thought much about principles, or the rights of the less fortunate, and his mind held no hollow platitudes. All he had to sustain him was an inherent sense of fair play. Before his eyes passed again and again the picture of that helpless old man, first cowed in fear, later dead at the end of Cristino's rope. Not for ten times twenty-five thousand dollars would he have permitted that to happen. If he left now, it would continue to happen, but it was beyond his power to stop such things. But at least he would not be a party to it. In the morning he would tell Bento Hermanny what to do with his job.

CHAPTER VII

FIVE BULLS FROM SEVEN

RANDY DENT did not quit the following day—for that night two of the bulls were stolen! How it happened, no one knew. The seven bulls had been penned in the corral that was part of the quadrangle. Nearly a score of riders were quartered within hearing distance, and a half-dozen noisy mongrels were always prowling about. Yet at dawn there were but five bulls where at sunset there had been seven.

Hermanny was beside himself with rage. The loss of the bulls was bad enough, but the insolence of the theft, committed under his very nose, was more than he could stand. He dispatched his riders in pairs to criss-cross the country in an attempt to pick up a trail. But it was found that the bulls had been led away by someone on foot and merged with a herd of cows. There the trail vanished in a hopeless maze of hoof prints.

The *fazendeiro* ignored Randy that day, so late in the afternoon the Texan saddled and rode down the line alone. When he reached the Figuereido fence,

he swung south and followed it toward the river. There was no wind, and the air was intensely clear. The fence line took him up to a little hillock, where he dismounted under a clump of palms. He felt strangely shaky and a little dizzy, as if touched with fever. He rubbed an exploratory hand across his forehead, and found it moist with sweat. Tying his horse, he stretched out in the shade where he had a view of the surrounding country. Southward, from the boundaries of Paraguay, the great plateaus of the Mato Grosso stretched endlessly to the north. Truly, he thought, it was a fabulous land. He felt its spell creeping over him.

The sudden nickering of his horse broke up his reverie. He sat up, shading his eyes with his hand. A lone rider was swinging up toward him on the opposite side of the fence. Randy struggled to his feet, and loosened his gun in its holster. Then he whistled softly in surprise.

The rider was Mariana Figuereido!

She had not seen him, for she was singing softly to herself. She was almost abreast of the trees, when her horse whinnied and stopped.

Randy stepped into the open. "Don't be startled," he said in English.

The girl paled, but maintained her poise. She surveyed him disdainfully a moment, and then began to swing her horse away.

"Wait, please!" Randy called. "I've been wanting to see you."

She reined in, but did not speak.

Randy walked over and leaned on the smooth wire. "Look," he said earnestly. "I want to apologize for . . . well, for what I did that other day."

She colored so crimson, he couldn't help smiling. "It was unpardonable," she snapped at him.

"I know," he admitted. "I don't expect you to excuse it. But I just wanted you to know that I regret it." He couldn't resist adding: "At least that I was so crude about it."

Her full red lips flattened into a thin, angry line. "You are very crude, it is true," Mariana said stiffly. "I am unable to understand you North Americans."

"We're not very subtle."

She hesitated. "I should hate you!" she told him severely.

"But you don't?"

She bit her lip. "My brother told me what you did to that Cristino who tried to kill him! For a gunman who murders poor farmers, it was indeed a strange act."

Randy flushed. "In my country," he grunted, "we don't shoot people in the back."

"Oh!" she said with pointed irony. "You drag them from their beds to kill them, perhaps?"

He took out a sack of tobacco and commenced to fashion a smoke. To his surprise, his hands were trembling. "I think I can explain that," Randy muttered.

"Then you are a ver' clever man—as well as a liar!" she cried in a burst of passion. Before he could reply, she put spurs to her horse and galloped away.

Randy watched until she had passed from sight, then he flung the half-formed cigarette away and swung into the saddle. *Well,* he cursed himself, *you wanted to see her again! Now that you've succeeded in making a perfect fool of yourself, why don't you go back to Texas where you belong?"*

AS HE wearily turned his horse homeward along the trail, a few drops of rain fell. Randy rode gloomily through the thickening dusk, and darkness had long since set in when he at last jogged into the quadrangle of the ranch—only to find the place in a turmoil of excitement.

Hermanny ran up before he dismounted. "I've been searching all over for you!" he cried with enthusiasm. "We have found Manoel's hiding place! The bulls are there—and probably your money! Is that not news to cheer you up?"

"If true," growled Randy.

Hermanny laughed. "It is true enough. Our own Teresa brings us the word," roared the *fazendeiro.* "With her own eyes she saw the bulls. The place is not five leagues from here. Will you lead the men?"

Randy shook his head. "No dice. I've

had a bellyful of your gangs, Hermanny. When you've got a cut-throat like Cristino on a string you don't need me."

"Bah!" snorted the rancher. "Don't get the blood up into your neck, *amigo!* Cristo is a good man, but he is no leader. It cannot be that the American is afraid?"

Randy swung around resentfully.

"There is also the matter of your twenty-five thousand dollars plus the reward money," Hermanny added quickly. "Get that, and you can go home a rich man. *Não?*"

Randy studied his new employer in silence. The men were anxious to get under way, and so were the horses. The whole quadrangle seethed with a restless urgency that was difficult to resist. A vague premonition warned him to refuse, yet somehow he couldn't find a suitable excuse. His brain wasn't working, and it was all he could do to remain upright in the saddle.

Hermanny took his silence for assent. He slapped his leg. "I have told Cristo that he will obey your instructions as if they were my own," he told Randy. "You will have a dozen men, for this time I am sure of my information, and I will not need so many to guard the *fazenda.* With luck you should return by dawn, with my bulls"—he grinned in the half-light—"and your money, *amigo.*"

Randy shrugged. "O. K. I'll ride," he agreed finally. "But win, lose, or draw, I'm through after this. I don't like the way you do business, *Senhor* Hermanny."

The *fazendeiro* gave him a cold smile. "You are a very independent man, *amigo.* May God go with you."

Randy changed to a fresh mount, then nodded curtly to Cristino who was waiting on a big roan. The gunman grinned back and turned his horse.

The night was opaque as they groped their way down the trail. The horses' hooves made a muffled drum beat on the soft earth, and the only other sound came from the jingle of bit chains and the musical tinkle of silver-mounted spurs. Occasionally Randy caught the indistinct blur of Cristino's face floating on a level with his own, but for the most part he could see nothing at all. He lost all track of time, for his mind was sunk in a black fog of his own making.

Some time after midnight, it began to rain softly. Once or twice they saw lights in the distance and Cristino led the column in a wide detour. With neither moon nor stars to orient himself, Randy was soon hopelessly lost. He no longer cared. The fever was fast numbing his consciousness.

They dipped into a swale and the rain came down hard. Randy was chilled, despite the wrack of the fever. The rain seemed to dampen the riders' ardor, and they drew together into a knot. As they came up out of the swale into the *mato,* the trail narrowed so that they had to go in single file. Cristino took the lead, and Randy drew in behind him; he could hear the clop-clop-clop of the others strung out behind.

Here in the forest, the blackness was intense. Randy's horse became nervous and began to prance. It jolted Randy out of his sick miasma, and he was just bending forward to stroke the arched neck, when the first shot shattered the stillness. . .

Then pandemonium exploded all around them!

The gunfire came in rolling waves, broken only by the shrieking of men and the screams of terrified horses. Cristino yelled: "*O Meu Deus!*" and came plunging back along the line. Randy was almost unseated, and as he tried to unholster his gun, his horse shrilled in pain. It reared on its hind legs and pirouetted. Randy kicked his feet clear of the stirrups . . . and toppled into a dark pool of oblivion.

Like a drowning man, he floated to the surface of consciousness long enough to know that he was being transported somewhere, but the agony of his body jerked him back to the surcease of insensibility. During the next brief moment of lucidity, he heard the unintelligible murmur of voices, and the wraith of a woman's figure merged with the mist. But when he tried to catch at the vision, the waters of darkness closed over him again.

The next time he was more cunning. He kept his eyes closed and tried to

hold his breath, as if that would keep him in the world of reality. But his body felt as if it were on a spit, being slowly turned over a blazing fire. He screamed aloud, and a cool hand caressed his forehead. He tried to drag himself away from the flames, but someone held him there.

RANDY awoke to find himself alone. He was very weak, but his head was clear this time. He was lying in a grass hammock, strung across the single room of a daub-and-wattle native hut. Through a window screened with netting, he looked out on a small pasture fenced with split bamboo. Somehow, he had a vague remembrance of such a place, as if some time in the long ago he had visited here. But that, he assured himself, was impossible.

He moved a weary hand over his eyes, and to his amazement touched a heavy beard. He felt of it gingerly. It was his own face. The ridiculousness of it made him laugh out loud. Why, hell! He had shaved only yesterday at Hermanny's ranch!

"Oh, *senhor!* You are at last awake!" cried a voice beside him.

Randy turned his head, conscious of the effort it cost him. His jaw sagged. He closed his eyes tightly, and opened them again. Incredibly, Mariana Figuereido was standing there!

He was afraid to speak for fear she would vanish again. She came over to his side and put her hand on his forehead.

"The fever has almost gone," she said, and smiled.

Randy reached up and caught her hand. "I don't want you to escape me again," he whispered.

"I haven't escaped you, *senhor!*"

He grinned wearily. "Oh yes, you did —yes, you did!" He tightened his grip on her. "Now tell me—where am I? What happened? Why are you . . . ?"

"*Shh-h!*" she coaxed. "Do not talk so much. You are still ver' sick, *senhor.* For nearly ten days we did not think you would live."

Randy gulped. "Ten days?"

"*Sim!* I mean—yes. Your horse fall on you ver' hard. But you North Americanos are ver' tough people. The horse he has died instead."

"But, you—how . . . ?"

A thick shadow fell between them as the fat Teresa lumbered into the little room. She scowled darkly at the younger woman, then spoke sharply in Portuguese. Mariana nodded.

To Randy, she said: "Teresa says I must not use up your strength with useless talk, *senhor.* I go now . . . "

"Wait!" begged Randy. "You can't go. You haven't told me . . . "

"*Va embora!*" ordered the fat woman, and Mariana turned away.

At the door she paused. "Go to sleep now, *senhor.* Tomorrow perhaps . . . " And with a smile she was gone.

Randy tried to lift his head in protest, but Teresa shoved him back. When he began to argue, she wagged a stumpy forefinger in front of his face and drew the shades over the window. She went out without speaking.

In spite of his disappointment and curiosity, he soon fell asleep. The room was flooded with the flame-colored light of the setting sun when he awakened. He felt grand this time. The heat had burned out of the day, and the air was cool and fresh. He lay breathing deeply, until a slight sound warned him that he was not alone. He turned his head . . .

The one-eyed Manoel was leaning serenely against the wall!

"'ALLO, *meu amigo!*" chortled Manoel. "You are feel ver' good, I t'ink—*Gracias a Deus!* Thanks be to God!"

For a long time, Randy couldn't speak. He just lay glaring while his mind did a cerebral handspring. Now the confused picture was, in part, taking form. Small wonder he had thought this hut familiar. He had started out to capture Manoel, and now he was Manoel's prisoner.

"You dirty scum!" he grated bitterly. "Now I know where I am! This is your own place."

"*Sim, sim!*" agreed Manoel, nodding vigorously. "Wance I live here with the fat Conchita who all the time laugh so her beeg belly she jiggle. I was ver', ver'

'appy 'ere, *amigo*. Is not wan nize place, *não?*"

Randy reared up on his elbows. "Quit beating around the bush. You've got all my money now, so what the hell else are you after?"

Manoel blinked with his one good eye, while the other, misted by a milky film, stared off at a tangent.

"*Que negocio é isso!*" he growled. "What funny business is this! I do not understand, *senhor?*"

"You lousy faker!" raged the Texan. "You fooled me twice, but you won't again. You tricked me into telling you when I was leaving Hermanny's with your bland lies, then you waylaid us, murdered Eduardo, and stole my money."

Manoel straightened slowly and jerked his big revolver from its holster.

"*Senhor*—are you say that *I*, Manoel José Antonio Diniz Felippe Carlos Sebastião Francisco Silva have rob his ver' good friend?"

Randy was mad enough to disregard the weapon. "That's exactly what I say, you murdering thief!"

Manoel raised the gun to his thick lips and noisily kissed the barrel. Then he crossed over to the hammock.

" 'Ere is my own Sweet Julia," he said, thrusting the gun, butt foremost, into Randy's hand. "It would be better that you shoot Manoel dead than believe he would do this t'ing." He patted his hairy chest. "The heart, *senhor*, she is 'ere!"

Randy stared at the gun in his hand, and then at Manoel. A moment ago he would have given anything for a chance to drill the fat thief, but now—with the latter's own gun in his hand, he didn't know what to do. He felt like a fool, lying there with the muzzle aimed at Manoel's distended belly, while Manoel himself posed like a ridiculous ham actor. The bandit's obvious sincerity disconcerted him.

"Talk fast!" he said grimly. "You also stole two of those bulls!"

"*Two?*" said the fat man. "*Amigo*, you 'ave been asleep wan long time. I 'ave stole *t'ree* more since that night." He heaved his shoulders. "Like Manoel, they are ver' satisfactory bulls. *Sim!*"

Randy lowered the gun in disgust. The man was insane! He thought of calling the Gargantuan Teresa to tie up the bandit, then it dawned on him that Teresa must be in league with Manoel. That was it! Why, hell, it was Teresa who had tipped Manoel off to the raids; it must have been Teresa who walked the bulls out of the Hermanny corral, for the mongrels would surely have barked if a stranger had come near the place. Randy's heart skipped a beat! By God, they must be holding Mariana Figuereido a prisoner, too!

He jerked up the muzzle so that it covered Manoel's broad beam.

"Now listen carefully, coyote!" he said coldly. "You'll do exactly what I tell you, or . . ." He hefted the revolver meaningly.

Manoel bowed. "The *senhor's* slightest wish she are my law!"

"It better be. Look—call that fat stool-pigeon of yours—that Teresa dame. Tell her to release Mariana Figuereido and send her in here. No—don't move yourself!"

Manoel spread his pudgy hands in resignation. "I am desolate, *amigo*. That t'ing you ask—she is impossible. The pretty *senhorita*, she is not 'ere."

"Don't give me that! Get her!"

"*Paciência, amigo.* 'Ave patience, I beg of you. Tomorrow, perhaps, she will come again." He shrugged his shoulders. "She 'ave spent much time here nursing you, an' sometime it are ver' hard to fool her brother." Manoel glanced beyond Randy, and slowly shook his head. "*Não, não,*" he said sharply in Spanish. "The *senhor* and Manoel we are friends!"

Randy suspected it was an old trick, but he risked a quick glance over his shoulder. He saw the dark, sullen face of Teresa gazing along the barrel of a carbine which she had poked through the soft mosquito netting. At Manoel's order, she slowly lowered the gun and disappeared from the window. A moment later, she reappeared at the door behind him.

RANDY gave in and sank against the pillow. Manoel chuckled happily, and slapped his bare leg.

"*Meu amigo*, he are confuse? *Ohla*,

I will explain! You t'ink mebbe Manoel he kill Eduardo, but that is not so. Eduardo was the brother of Conchita, who was my fat wife, and the brother, also, of Teresa. Why would Manoel kill his ver' good brother-in-law, *amigo?* Such a thing, she has no *lógica.* It does not make sense."

"Ah, nuts!" growled Randy. "None of it makes sense!"

"But yes, *senhor.* Eduardo was wan good man, but not practical. He t'ink mebbe if he stay with Barbosa, he could make him understand the poor farmer, and there would be no violence. But, *amigo,* Eduardo he was wan dreamer. After Hermanny 'ave Barbosa shot, he still will not see. . ."

Randy reared up again. "What's that? Hermanny had Barbosa shot, you say?"

Manoel spread his hands. "But, of course! Hermanny tol' you he was Barbosa's partner. He lies! He was just a *capitaz,* a foreman. He trick Barbosa, who was a silly wan, but kindly, into an agreement over one tiny interest in the place. Then he see that Barbosa will not live long. Nobody stop him, but he cannot get men who are born here who will kill their own peoples. So he steal your money so you cannot leave, then he hire you, *amigo.*"

"It would be better that you shoot Manoel dead." He patted his hairy chest. "The heart, senhor, *she is 'ere."*

Randy looked at the massive Teresa, and sensed that, far-fetched as Manoel's story sounded—it could be the truth.

"Why am I here?" he asked wearily.

"Because you are my friend," Manoel said simply. "Is not your country and mine fight the same enemy for freedom? No matter what name you give the

enemies, she are all the same. One side want liberty for the little man; the other side she is for the rich against the poor. Hermanny, he is believe like our enemy, so therefore, he is your enemy as well as mine. Is that not true, *amigo?*"

Randy passed a shaking hand over his forehead. "Oh, God, I guess so!" he muttered. "Then who killed Eduardo?"

Manoel's dark face clouded. "Right after you an' Eduardo leave the *fazenda,* Bento Hermanny and that wan Cristino ride out to hunt. Is not that your answer, *amigo?*"

"And Cristino?"

Manoel sighed. "We try to capture that wan, but in the darkness I am afraid we shoot you, *amigo.* So in our caution, Cristo he escape. That wan, I want alive. He can tell me many t'ings."

Randy was opening his mouth to ask another question when a bird shrilled nearby. Manoel stiffened. The call was repeated. The bandit snatched the carbine out of Teresa's hand.

"Someone comes, *amigo!*" he said sharply. "You keep my own Sweet Julia." He nodded at the revolver in Randy's hand. "I will be back, perhaps." With a curt word to the fat woman, he vanished.

Darkness had closed in, and the silence was strangely alive. Randy lay tense, his sweating hand closed on the butt of Manoel's gun. He heard the same bird-call repeated, but softly this time. Teresa seemed to relax. Then a horse galloped into the yard. A light appeared, and a moment later, Manoel led Mariana Figuereido into the room.

She was fighting hard for control. For a few moments she leaned against the wall, breathing heavily. Manoel held a small oil lantern that cast weird shadows about the room.

"My brother!" she sobbed abruptly. "He is dead!"

Manoel whistled softly. "Dead, *senhorita?*"

She bent her head, nodding. "With two of our men he met Hermanny and Cristino crossing our land. There were six of them. There were words. My brother had no chance." She broke down then, and ran sobbing into the open arms of the big Teresa.

Manoel took out his knife and made three scratches high on the wall. Watching him, Randy saw there were many marks already there.

"That make three more to be paid for," he said quietly, and there was a note in his voice that made Randy's hair bristle.

"Three more," Manoel repeated, and put his knife away.

MARIANA stayed at the tiny *fazenda* that night, and in the morning Randy drew from her enough of the missing fragments to complete his picture of the situation. The Figuereidos belonged to that almost extinct class of aristocracy which maintains a paternal and benevolent attitude toward their tenants and the small farmers in their neighborhood. Proud, short-sighted, honest in their own beliefs, the Figuereidos had tried to stand aloof from the local quarrels. Young Figuereido had refused to have any dealings with Manoel or his kind, believing them nothing but simple cattle-thieves; likewise he had rejected any suggestion of co-operation with Barbosa, whom he considered a parvenu. Hermanny, of course, he despised.

As he heard the tragic story, Randy was reminded of some of the smaller, prouder countries of Europe, such as Norway, who had believed themselves able to remain neutral in a world where there was no neutrality possible. Like blind, courageous Norway, young Figuereido had died on his own land.

Later he tried to learn from Manoel how Mariana came to be there with them in obvious defiance of her brother. Manoel merely scratched one bare instep with the spurs on his other foot, and winked his solitary eye.

"Is she not lovely, *amigo?*" He smacked his lips. "*Puxa!* For one so lovely, I would die—if only she were not so skinny."

"Come on, come on," snapped Randy. "What's the angle?"

"You are always in wan beeg hurry, *amigo!*" complained the fat man. "*Paciência,* I beg you." He shrugged expressively. "If I must save words, then it is like this, *amigo*: Thees leetle *sen-*

horita she 'ave wan beeg *fazenda.* Hermanny he 'ave wan eye on her *fazenda,* the other on Mariana. That is bad. I go to her an' I say: *'Puxa!* I 'ave wan strong, peeg-headed Americano who will ver' likely die. You 'alp me make him live, then some day you 'ave strong man to help you run *fazenda.'* " He shook his head. "I know in my heart Hermanny or Cristo will keel that foolish Nestor, her brother. Then she need you, *senhor!* Is it not so?"

"Damn you, Manoel!" Randy growled. "You seem to know one hell of a lot of things before they happen!"

Manoel turned up his palms. "That is not surprise, *amigo.* I am wan ver' ver' smart man."

"Nuts!" snorted Randy, as Mariana came into the room.

Manoel took off his silly straw hat and gave her a sweeping bow. "I am jus' tell the *senhor* 'ow lovely you are, *senhorita!*"

"If only I wasn't so skinny! Yes, I heard you, Manoel!"

The one-eyed bandit showed no embarrassment. "I am wan man who like his comfort," he admitted, hitching up his pants. "Some day, perhaps you will be comfortable, like Conchita—I 'ope."

"I hope *not,*" said the girl. She looked at Randy. "I came to say good-bye. Teresa tells me you are nearly well enough to travel, so you will be going back to your country. I am returning to my home also."

Randy glanced sharply at Manoel who was indifferently picking his teeth with his long-bladed knife. Randy said: "I'm not going home until I get either my money, or those bulls."

"You are a ver' stubborn man," she remarked.

"Peeg-headed," amended Manoel.

Randy smiled grimly. "Look here," he told her, "I need a job. If you want me . . . ?"

Something of the old fire blazed in her eyes, but before she could speak, Randy cut in: "I apologized for what I did before. It won't happen again, I promise you."

"Bah!" snorted Manoel, and spat across the room. "That wan is a beeg fool!" And he stalked out of the room, muttering: "*Puxa!* What a silly promise!"

Mariana hesitated. "*Senhor* Hermanny has already offered to buy my place for a good price," she admitted.

"Then you told him . . . ?"

She met his eyes. "I told him—*no, never!*"

Randy threw one leg out of the hammock. "Manoel!" he shouted. "Manoel, you thief! Get me a horse!"

CHAPTER VIII

QUIT OR FIGHT

THE Figuereido *fazenda* adjoined the Barbosa property on the east, and extended southward from the *Corrego do Boi Mocho*—the creek where Randy had nearly lost his bulls to the savage *piranhas*—almost to the Rio Apa, the border of Paraguay. Despite their down-at-the-heels appearance, the quaint, ancient buildings had an air of dignity. Walking through the sober, low-beamed room, it seemed to Randy that he must have known the people that lived there always, and that their minds still remained in a dead past. A king's robe, slightly motheaten, was all he could think of. Randy could sense the tragedy of a passed era that was, in spite of its horrible mistakes, somehow strangely noble in the way it still hung on.

They had arrived just at dusk, and after Randy had been shown around briefly, he met the other hands. There were only five of them left, and of these, two were old men. They listened respectfully while Mariana introduced them, but their manner to the Texan was sullen and hostile. Randy did not resent it. He knew their reaction to him was born of their affection for her. They believed that she was making a mistake; one of them had been in the group that day when Nestor Figuereido and Randy had fought. But they were loyal, and for that, Randy respected them.

After the men had gone about their business, Mariana looked at Randy. "Tomorrow, you will start to work. Meanwhile"—she smiled whimsically—"you will be my guest."

Randy grinned. "I understand. You have my promise, you know."

She colored. "I wasn't thinking of that," she retorted. "Now, I will show you to your quarters. We shall have dinner at nine."

"Nine! Whew!"

"That is the custom here. This house lives on tradition." She sighed. "Even the servants operate on an ancient routine. Perhaps you think to change it?"

"I hadn't thought about it," Randy said. "After all—I'm just a cowhand, *senhorita*."

After scraping his face clean of its beard, and a hot lazy bath, Randy Dent felt almost human again. The dinner was one he would long remember. Once, in a movie, he had seen a dining room like this, with its hand-adzed rafters, and glowing paneled walls. Mariana sat at the extreme end of a long, narrow table, softly illumined by candlelight. The food was rich and heavily spiced, and the wine was heady. An ancient Indian servant ghosted soundlessly through the dim half-light. It was all unreal somehow, and Randy felt out of place.

But he enjoyed it immensely, and afterward, they walked out into the patio for coffee. A breeze had swept away the humidity of the day, leaving the night cool and sweet. Randy stretched out his long legs and heaved a sigh. Yes, this was a wonderful land!

Mariana asked abruptly: "Tell me about yourself, *Senhor* Dent?"

"There isn't much to tell," Randy admitted.

She had been sitting primly on the edge of her chair. Now she set her cup and saucer on the low table, and leaned back. "America must be a wonderful place," she mused. "Always, I have wanted to see it. Is it like this in your Texas, *senhor*?"

Randy fashioned himself a smoke. "Not like this. I—well, this place is like something out of a fairy story, I reckon."

"*Hmmnnn!* That's the trouble with it. It was built many years ago by my grandfather. My father kept it as it had been, and my brother . . . he, too, tried to hold onto the past."

"And you, *senhorita*?"

"The past was very comfortable, for people like us," she confessed. "But when a period is over, it is over. My father and my brother thought to keep it by isolating themselves from reality. One cannot escape from the inevitable, *senhor*. Is it not so?"

Randy turned so that he could see her better. "You're a strange one," he marveled. "Where did you pick up those ideas?"

"I went to school in England. I saw the changes taking place there, even then, among the old aristocracy. The war has put the finishing touches, not to the people, but to a certain outmoded way of life. Here in the Mato Grosso, we have the paradox of an ancient regime in a frontier area." She waved her hand as if to dismiss the subject. "Now —about you, *senhor*?"

Somehow, Randy found himself talking of his plans and hopes, of his boyhood in the cow-camps of Texas, of his father, and of Jim Hanley. She listened in silence until he had finished.

"We all want the same thing," she ruminated. "Peace, security, happiness. Is it not the eternal quest, *senhor*? Before long, you will go back to Texas, I presume."

"I can't go back until I recover that money," he said grimly. "Why should a wealthy man like Hermanny steal that from me?"

She shook her head. "Bento Hermanny has not long been a wealthy man. A few years ago he rode into this land a pauper. My brother would not hire him, so he inflicted himself on Barbosa. Pedro Barbosa was not a bad man, but weak. He gambled and drank too much, but he also had his dreams. That is why he wanted good bulls to improve his stock. Somehow he made a contract with Hermanny—perhaps Bento did him some service, I do not know. But Bento was quick to rise for he swept all opposition out of his way."

"I wish I could prove he was a crook," Randy said.

She shrugged. "Bento Hermanny is no fool. He has planned too carefully to leave any tracks."

"The very planning is often the weakest link in a criminal chain," Randy said. "I'm curious—how did you get tangled

up—what I mean is, how was it Manoel came to you about me?"

She was silent so long he feared he had offended her. But at length she spoke, as if seeking the right words.

"Manoel is a strange one, *senhor.* He is half-Satan, half-angel. I doubt he can read a book, but the mind of a man—or a woman, it seems—is to him an open book. I was terrified when he appeared one night in my room; like a ghost he came. He told me what he was trying to do, how he was trying to free this section of the Mato Grosso from the tentacles of men like Hermanny and give it back to the people. Strange, although I hated his very name, although I knew him to be a murderer and a thief—I believed him, *senhor.* His logic is like the eye of a Svengali. I rose from my bed, and followed him to . . . to you."

"But why me?" Randy persisted.

"That I cannot say, *senhor.*" She rose hastily. "It is late. I must bid you goodnight. We will breakfast here in the patio." And then she was gone.

RANDY was loath to break the spell, so he smoked another cigarette before retiring. But later, when he was alone in his room, he suffered a let-down. While he had been with Mariana, her femininity had bolstered up his courage and given him a sense of importance. Without her, he began to realize what a terrific task he had undertaken. As both Manoel, the bandit, and Hermanny, the cattle king, had pointed out—this was like Texas in the old, old days. The days when Randy's grandaddy had gone into the brawling, sprawling West as a boy. Texas history was repeating itself deep in the heart of the Mato Grosso; the old feuds, the Taylor-Sutton war, the Horrell-Higgins row, were coming alive under another name. The Figuereido-Hermanny war? No, it was more than a private feud between two cattle barons; here was a fight that involved not only Mariana and her property, but the lives and properties of scores of small farmers. What was it she had said that everyone wanted? *Peace, security, happiness—the eternal quest!* It was an almost hopeless job for one lone alien American, and Randy Dent knew all too well that he was no Bat Masterson or Wyatt Earp.

Bento Hermanny was smart, powerful, ruthless. Like all feudal barons, past and present, he would wrangle himself on the weatherside of the law. To oppose him meant to be killed or outlawed, as had Nestor Figuereido and Manoel. Randy felt weighted down with a feeling of inadequacy, of futility, and most of all, unreality.

And then he remembered the killing of Barbosa in the tiny bar-room at Bôa Vista, the murder of Eduardo crouched in the dusk over his evening fire, the slaughter of the old man in the night raid on the settlement, and finally the death of young Figuereido. Yes, he remembered those—and the hi-jacking of his own money.

With a soft curse, he started to undress. There was no use stewing about it. He had two courses open to him—quit, or fight. He laid his revolver on the chair near the head of his bed. His mind was made up.

NEXT morning, when Randy stepped into the patio, he found Mariana setting a breakfast table for two. Her back was towards him, and in a crisp gingham house dress, he didn't recognize her at first. Instead of the dark, exotic Brazilian beauty of the previous night, she looked like a very young and very pretty American housewife. He stood silent, watching her. She was humming a familiar melody. Then she must have sensed his presence, for she turned abruptly. Their eyes met, and at his grin, she blushed.

"Oh, hello!" she cried, with an embarrassed laugh. "You are just in time. How do you like your eggs, *senhor?* Sunnyside up?"

"Well, I'll be . . . !" Randy chuckled. "Is this the Mato Grosso, or Dallas, Texas?"

She laughed excitedly and ran into the kitchen. In a few minutes she was back with a platter of ham and eggs, and another quick trip produced a pot of coffee, American style, a stack of buttered toast and English marmalade.

Randy had seated himself, and now he rose as if to leave the patio.

"Where are you going?" she asked, half hurt.

"Back to bed and finish this dream. It just can't be real."

"Taste it, and see!" She giggled. "Oh, *senhor,* long have I wanted to cook by myself a good American breakfast. But my poor brother, he would have swooned. To him, a lady does not do what he called menial tasks. And even now, our cook is in tears because I have made this breakfast myself."

Randy sampled the coffee. After the strong Brazilian brew, it tasted heavenly to his American tongue. The eggs were just right, too.

"Well," he said resignedly, "I reckon I've seen just about everything now. I couldn't believe my eyes, but my stomach doesn't lie. I salute you, *senhorita!* You are a miracle."

She sat down, and pouted. "Underneath, you men are all alike. Even you Americans are surprised when a woman accomplishes anything." She laughed again, and pushed up the knot of black hair piled high on the back of her pretty head.

Randy couldn't take his eyes off her. *Whoa, fella, watch out!* he warned himself. *You're just a cowhand. Get out of line, and she'll slap you back in place quicker'n a scalded cat!* He lowered his eyes to his plate and kept them there throughout the meal.

"Now," she said, when he had lighted a cigarette to finish up with, "I suppose you will want to look over the property first of all?"

Randy shook his head. "First—I will have a talk with Bento Hermanny."

Her eyes widened and one hand groped instinctively toward her throat.

"Oh, *senhor!* You . . ." She stopped in confusion.

Randy stared moodily at the tip of his smoke. "Maybe Hermanny knows what's happened to me; maybe he doesn't," he said slowly. "But one thing sure—he's got to know I'm not working for him now."

Her dark eyes shadowed with doubts. "But . . . he is a ver' dangerous man!" she protested. "He will be angry."

"I expect he will be," Randy said grimly and pushed himself to his feet.

CHAPTER IX

THE *capitura*

WHATEVER unpleasant emotional reaction Bento Hermanny may have had to the sudden reappearance of the young Texan, he kept to himself. When Randy walked into his office, the rancher rose and proffered his hand.

"*Bom dia, amigo!*" he boomed genially. "This is a surprise!"

Randy ignored the outstretched hand. "I figured it would be," he remarked dryly. "In case there were any doubts left about my job here—I quit."

The *fazendeiro* chose to ignore the insult. "I see," he said slowly. "Then you have decided to go back to your own country." He shrugged. "Perhaps it is well."

"No," said Randy, "I'm not going back. I'm working for the Figuereido outfit."

A slight chilling of the eyes was all the expression Hermanny showed. He took a cigarette from a silver container and shoved the box across the desk toward the American in a casual gesture that left himself open to no rebuff. After lighting the tube, he sat back.

"Dent," he began quietly, "that would be a serious mistake. I like you; you're a man's man, and I believe you'll take some straight talk." As Randy opened his mouth to speak, Hermanny stopped him. "Wait—hear me out. I don't know how you got tangled up with the Figuereidos; there's been rumors of a tie-in with Manoel Silva, but that's beside the point. A smart man doesn't cast his lot with a losing side. Unless I miss my guess, you're letting sentiment and a pretty face fog the issue. The Figuereidos are the last remnants of a decadent aristocracy; they're through here as well as everywhere else. If, as I have been told, they have teamed up with that one-eyed cattle-thief, they have merely hastened their inevitable end. You can't help them, so there's no sense in sticking your young neck out."

Randy eyed him from a set, expressionless face. "Are you finished?" At the *fazendeiro's* shrug, he went on: "Now get this—I'm staying right here in the valley. There's a little matter of a couple of murders and my twenty-five thousand bucks to clear up. I've got some suspicions about those, but I'm not ready to make any accusations just yet. When I am, I'll let you know."

Hermanny methodically knocked an inch of ash from the end of his cigarette.

"You're an obstinate man," he said, and although his voice was quiet, it had taken on a metallic ring. "This is not your land, and you are not wanted down here. If you stay here and attempt to buck me, I'll have you kicked out."

"Or shot in the back, eh?"

Hermanny spread his hands, palms up. "I cannot be responsible for your safety, *senhor,* if you pick fights."

Randy set his knuckles on the desk and leaned across it. "O. K., Hermanny —we understand each other now. You stay on your side of the line, I'll stay on mine. But keep your hired gunmen at home. If I catch your Cristino on the wrong side of the wire, I'll kill him. Is that plain?"

Hermanny's eyes blazed, and he started out of his chair. Then he got himself under control.

"You fool!" he grated. "I'll break you! I'll have you shipped out of the Mato Grosso within the week. Whether you go out vertically or horizontally will depend on how fast you can travel. Now get out!"

As Randy started through the door, Hermanny jeered: "Kiss the little *senhorita* for me!"

Randy dove halfway across the room before he pulled up short. "I'll just tally that crack up to your personal account," he promised. "But there's one thing sure —I won't murder my employer to steal *that* ranch, *hombre.*"

Leaving Hermanny to mull that one over, he stalked out to his horse.

MARIANA was waiting anxiously for his return. She listened in silence as he told her in detail all that had been said; all, that is, except Hermanny's parting remark. He watched her as he talked. She had changed from the gingham house dress to comfortable *bombachas,* and he thought again how incredibly tiny she was.

"Then you are really going to stay here?" she asked at the conclusion of his talk.

"Did you think I'd run away?" he said, his eyes never leaving her face.

She flushed. "No," she admitted slowly, "I did not think that. But this Hermanny is bad, *senhor.* He will make much trouble, and you are a stranger to this country. He has power, and he has money."

"Let's have a look at what we've got," Randy said dryly. "How are your men? Can you trust them?"

"Completely," she said with finality. "I've told Tuba to show you around. He is the old one. To us here, he is something like one of your Southern mammies." She hesitated. "Tuba knows this country and its customs, and he is very wise. You will understand?"

Tuba, Randy soon learned, was a remarkable character. In his wiry veins flowed the blood of three ancient races —Portuguese, Negro, and Indian. Somehow, he fitted perfectly into the atmosphere of the old *fazenda,* although he lacked any evidence of decay. He was one of those dried-out, ageless creatures who appear only to mellow with time. He was a sort of sub-deity around the place, and his language was philosophical and grandiose. While he could walk upright under the Texan's outstretched arm, his tough little frame exuded a quiet strength that was something more than physical. How old he was, not even Tuba himself knew, for he had served not only Mariana's father, but her grandfather as well. Yet he could ride with agility and his pale eyes were clear and shrewd.

That first day, he rode in silence as he guided Randy about the big ranch. For his own part, Randy spoke little. He was too interested in the lay-out to worry much about what Tuba thought of him.

The Figuereido holdings were badly run down. The cattle were mostly *Creolas,* rangy brutes that brought to

mind the old Longhorn of early Texas. There were a lot of Brahmas among them—*Zebus*, as Manoel had called them—but for the most part it was a sorry outfit.

On the ride back they stopped to water their horses. Tuba stood silent, watching the Texan with his small hard eyes. Finally, he said in Spanish: "*Senhor*, you come from a long, long distance to our land. We do not know you, except that you join first with the man who is our enemy. Suddenly you appear as one of us. We have a right to ask you why these things are."

"Did not the *senhorita* explain?" Randy asked.

Tuba gave a little frown of impatience. "The *senhorita* is very young, and she is a female. I will speak with frankness now. It does not look good—your coming like this. There is nothing you can do, except bring trouble. You do not know this country or the people here. You will not be trusted. This Hermanny is strong. He has offered to buy this place for enough money so that the *senhorita* could go to far places and live in peace."

Randy studied the old man thoughtfully. Tuba kept his eyes steady, but they were inscrutable.

"Our *senhorita* spoke to me about you," Randy said slowly, choosing his words with care. "She told me you were very, very wise. But she did not tell me that you would run away from a fight, like a rabbit."

Tuba's swarthy face paled. "I am thinking only of the *senhorita*," he said with dignity.

"So am I," snapped Randy. "You speak the truth, Old One, when you say I know nothing of the people or the customs. It was for that our *senhorita* told me I could depend on you. Now you want to lie down and quit when the trouble starts."

"You have the bark of a very young hound," remarked Tuba. "Yet it is easy to be brave when there is no one around to fight. We will wait and see if your bark is as loud when you meet the *tigre*. Until then I have only this thing to say. If anything happens to the *senhorita*—you shall be held to account." He swung into the saddle. "Now we must go back, *senhor*."

TROUBLE started at once, and Randy Dent soon came to realize what he had let himself in for. As the days lengthened into weeks little things added irritation upon irritation until his nerves were raw and his temper never very far beneath the surface. Grass fires stampeded the cattle, fences were cut, waterholes poisoned, and on the second week, one of their best riders was shot in a barroom brawl at a nearby settlement.

Worst of all, the men did not trust him. It was nothing he could put his finger on, for they carried out his orders to the letter, and old Tuba worked tirelessly, but their everlasting disapproval was depressing. He avoided Mariana as much as he decently could because he knew the men resented his being with her. But he couldn't explain that to her, and she in her turn drew away from him. Never in his life had he suffered such a feeling of incompetence and loneliness. He began to wish Manoel would make one of his mysterious reappearances for he sorely needed counsel. Nothing constructive had been accomplished; at most he was merely patching up the damage done by Hermanny.

He couldn't even prove it was Hermanny. Once he mentioned it to Mariana, and she intimated Manoel might be responsible. Randy was surprised at that, but once away from the hypnotic influence of the one-eyed bandit, Mariana seemed to revert to her old suspicions and distrust. By the end of the second week, Tuba reported that nearly twenty percent of the stock was missing.

Then late one afternoon, the *capitura* arrived at the Figuereido *fazenda*. Randy knew of the *capitura* by reputation. They were a sort of informal mounted police, deputized by the government to hunt down the bandits and border thieves of the Mato Grosso. Most of them were recruited from the sons of *fazendeiros* who had lost money, cattle, or lives to the bandits, and because they were inspired by hate and revenge, they were ruthless. It was sufficient merely to be suspected by the *capitura*, and

death was inevitable. They made few arrests.

Randy was repairing a latigo in the saddle-house when Tuba came and told him he was wanted at the big house. As Randy started out the door, Tuba stopped him. The old man hesitated, and it was obvious he had something on his mind. Randy waited until Tuba overcame his natural reticence.

"There are times to speak softly," he said in his quiet, slurring Spanish. "This is one of those times, *senhor.* It is better to keep silent and be thought wise, than talk much and be shot for a fool. These *capitura* are of bad tempers, and the blood mounts quickly to their necks. Remember that, *gringo.*"

Randy grinned. "Thanks, Old One. I'll remember."

He found three riders lounging on the wide veranda, and inside the house the captain and his lieutenant were talking with Mariana. Her face was very pale, and somehow, framed by her dark hair, looked lovelier than Randy had ever seen it.

The conversation ceased as he entered the room, and the young captain stared at Randy with brooding black eyes. His was a cold, disillusioned face, and Randy had seen a dozen like it among the rangers of his native Texas.

Mariana met his eyes. "Captain Viéra wished to investigate you," she said in English. "He speaks Spanish. I hope. . ." She paused, and Randy knew she was afraid for him.

In Spanish, he said to the officer: "My name is Dent. You wanted to see me, *senhor?*"

"Produce your papers, please!"

Randy got out his passport, his health certificate, and his yellow police card. Viéra studied them carefully, and handed them back. He appraised the Texan with a look that was little short of hostile.

"You are acquainted with one Manoel Silva?" he demanded.

Randy shrugged. "I have met Manoel, yes."

"You paid him to bring some bulls down here?"

"That's right," admitted Randy. "I paid him one *conto.*"

"You had not made this payment of one *conto* when you delivered the bulls," snapped the officer. "Therefore, you will explain please just when and where this payment was made."

Randy could have kicked himself for he saw that Viéra had trapped him. He glanced sideways at Mariana, and saw the fear in her eyes.

"You will answer!" barked Viéra.

After a moment's hesitation, Randy told the truth; he told how Manoel had been waiting in his quarters on the Hermanny estate that night.

Viéra's black eyes brightened. "Ah!" he said. "You dealt with this thief on the property of *Senhor* Hermanny. That is a capital crime in this country."

"To pay a man for a service?"

"To deal with a bandit, *senhor!*"

"I did not know he was a bandit at that time."

Viéra scowled. "*Senhor* Hermanny told you he was. That we know."

Randy met his eyes. "Bento Hermanny told me, yes. But this I also know—Bento Hermanny is a liar!"

Viéra flushed. "*Sehnor!* Bento Hermanny is a prominent man in this community. You are a foreigner. You have committed a serious crime for which you will answer." He nodded at his lieutenant. "Arrest this man!"

AS the fat lieutenant dragged himself out of a chair, Mariana let out a cry and started talking. Randy silenced her with a gesture.

"Wait a minute, Captain," he growled. "I have heard much of your *capitura,* even in my country." That wasn't strictly true, but it was effective. "I have heard that like our Texas Rangers and the famous Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the *capitura* are a band with honor. They do not make mistakes. Is that not true, Captain?"

Viéra frowned impatiently. "It is indeed true. What has that to do . . . ?"

"Then," Randy cut in, "why do you persecute this young *senhorita?* Why do you not arrest the man who murdered her brother, instead of hounding me, a foreigner?"

"One thing at a time," grunted the

captain. "You have much to answer for. We are not bothering the *senhorita.*"

"You are," snapped Randy. "I'm trying to help her get this ranch in order. You speak of Hermanny. Captain, he is a liar and a thief and a murderer."

"Unless you can prove these things," Viéra warned, "such libel is a crime in itself."

"If I could prove them, I would recover my money and return to my own country," Randy admitted. "It is for that I stay."

Viéra shook his head. "You will come with us. Our court will decide. By your own admissions, you have convicted yourself. We know you have had business with this Manoel. That is enough." He nodded again at his lieutenant.

"On whose word is this?"

Viéra shrugged as if this question were purely rhetorical.

"*Senhor* Hermanny has sworn to the complaint."

Randy had a wild impulse to lash out as the lieutenant touched his arm. He jerked away and backed up a step, only to find himself staring into the business end of two revolvers. The quickness with which the guns appeared indicated that the *capitura* were more than willing to live up to their reputation for not making arrests.

Mariana cried: "Wait! Captain Viéra, you cannot do this! We have known each other since childhood! Is it not so?"

"There is no need for talk or tears," grumbled Viéra.

Mariana stood very straight. "There will be no tears. I know something of the law, *senhor.* You can leave *Senhor* Dent with me. I will produce him when the court convenes."

Viéra squinted at the Texan. "You can put up five thousand dollars bail perhaps?" he challenged.

Randy's heart sank. He started to shake his head, when the girl interrupted.

"That will not be necessary. I will be responsible." She crossed the room to an old-fashioned desk. "I have no such amount in money, but I will give you a deed to the *fazenda.* It is all mine now."

Randy didn't like the glint in Viéra's eye, but before he could object, Mariana had whipped out a sheet of paper and was writing hurriedly.

Viéra walked over and stood behind her chair. "You are a fool to risk your place for this foreigner," he told her bluntly. "You will have to stipulate that if he fails to appear at the proper time, your *fazenda* is forfeit. That is the law."

"He will appear!" she promised.

The fat lieutenant was grinning openly. Viéra scowled at him, and he stopped his smirking. Randy opened his mouth to argue the point, then held his peace. It was painfully obvious now that Hermanny was behind the move, and either alternative would please him just as well; one method removed Randy and the property fell into his hands by the inevitable course of events, the other put the property into his hands as soon as Randy was removed by extra-legal means. It was as beautiful a gamble as flipping a two-headed coin.

As Viéra was carefully folding the deed, Randy braced him. "Captain," he said, "twenty-five thousand dollars of my money was stolen. If I find the man who robbed me and turn him over to you—what happens?"

"You will have to prove it."

"Granted. But if I can?"

Viéra pursed his lips. "We deal with thieves quickly in this country, *senhor.* Regardless." He bowed to the girl. "We go now. I trust, *senhorita,* that you have not signed away your birthright. *Bom dia.*"

MARIANA did not stir from the desk as the two officers went out.

Randy lighted a cigarette and smoked in silence. Finally, he said: "I'm afraid you shouldn't have done that, Mariana." It was the first time he had used her name. "If I don't appear at their court or whatever they hold down here, you'll lose the place."

"You won't run away," she said.

"Naturally I won't," he snapped. "But Hermanny'll do his best to keep me away."

She looked up at him for a long time. "Please give me a cigarette," and when he had lighted it for her, she went on:

"There was nothing else to do, Randy. I guess you should have gone away before. Tuba warned me . . ."

"Tuba just doesn't like me," growled Randy.

"Tuba is very wise," she amended. "He knew something like this would happen. He has not forgiven you for dealing with Manoel Silva. Sometimes I think Tuba is right. A thief is a thief."

"Well, that puts me in a hell of a light," Randy grunted. "Manoel saved my neck several times. Look—about this arrest business. Can they make that silly charge stick?"

She lowered her eyes. "I'm afraid so," she said after a pause. "Randy I was wrong to let you come here. You should have gone home, and I should have sold the property to Hermanny."

"You can still sell it if you feel—"

She shook her head. "No. If I sell it, they'll put you in prison for dealing with Manoel, and then—"

"But you just finished telling me they'll do that anyhow."

She stubbed out the half-smoked cigarette. "That is why you had better go."

"And leave you holding the bag?" He slammed across the room. "What in hell kind of a rabbit do you take me for? Good God, we can't just sit here and take it! If I'm going to rot in jail here, I'll rot for something. I'll drill that damn Cristino and . . ."

". . . and get rid of the best piece of evidence you have in your favor," interposed the girl. "Cristino is the one man who knows the whole story besides Hermanny."

Randy whistled softly. "Good girl! I wonder . . ."

"No, no!" she cried in alarm. "Don't be hasty! We still have a few weeks before you will be forced into court. Meanwhile, something will happen . . ."

CHAPTER X

HERMANNY STRIKES AGAIN

RANDY was tightening his cinch in preparation for a line ride the following morning when Mariana walked into the corral. He had never seen her so early in the day, and from her appearance, he surmised she had slept little during the night. She nodded a silent greeting and leaned against the gate until he was finished. From her manner, he knew she had something on her mind, so he took his time with the saddle. But watching her, Randy couldn't help wondering about her personal life. There was a deep, brooding mystery hidden behind those black eyes, and there were better uses for the full moist lips than giving orders about a cow ranch. Perhaps there was a man of her own class somewhere in the background; in Rio or Paris or London. Why he picked those places, Randy didn't know, but he unconsciously associated her with centers of culture and glamor.

Then she was speaking to him. "Randy, what are your plans for the day?"

"Figgered to ride the fence down to the creek," he told her. "With our present luck, I should have some patching to do."

She gave him a tired smile. For a moment he thought she was going to say something, then she seemed to change her mind.

"Look, Mariana," he said earnestly, "I've been doing some heavy thinking. That was a swell gesture of yours—putting up the ranch to go bail for me, but it don't make sense. I don't know a damn thing about law, but I'm satisfied the *capitura* couldn't make the charge stick if I saw the American consul."

She shook her head. "Randy, the nearest American consul is in São Paulo —nearly two thousand miles from here."

"Well, then we'll get that paper back from the *capitura* and I'll take my chances. I can't let you lose . . . ."

She moved over and put a gently restraining hand on his arm as Tuba came around the corner of the stable. The old man paused, gave Randy a slow, disapproving look, and turned on his heel. In spite of himself, Randy felt the blood mount to his ears.

"Damn it!" he blazed. "What's wrong around here?"

She tightened her hand on his wrist. "No, Randy—not now," she urged anxiously. "I, too, have been thinking it over. Listen—you should reach the ford

of the creek about midday. There I will meet you at noon. I will bring a lunch, and we will talk this thing over alone."

She was so close to him he had to bend his head down to look into her eyes. She was frightened, and he sensed suddenly that something had happened about which he knew nothing. He wanted to hear about it right now, but he saw she was glancing around to see where Tuba had gone.

"Please meet me at twelve, Randy," she begged.

"Hell, you're the boss," he growled, slipping the reins over the horse's neck. "Twelve it is." He swung into the saddle and leaned down.

"Tell me," he asked impulsively. "Haven't you got some relatives, or anyone who could help you in this . . . ?"

She shook her head quickly. "There is no one, Randy." Then she turned away.

He sat watching her until she had crossed the yard and entered the big house.

AS Randy expected, part of the fence was down. Three posts had been torn out of the ground and burned, and the wire carried away. By the time he closed the gap with a makeshift, it was after eleven. He was forking a lively little strawberry roan who wanted to run, so he gave her her head. But before she had gone a half-mile, she stepped into an armadillo hole, and it was only by the grace of God she didn't break a foreleg. After that, he walked her.

But the incident started a train of thought. It reminded him why the native riders of this region used the small, curved, barefoot stirrup and gripped its outer edge with one or two toes, for then they could always kick free if the horse went down. He remembered hearing how, a number of years ago, Tex Rickard had brought a band of American cowboys into the Mato Grosso. Many of them had been badly injured in falls, for the armadillos leave nasty pitfalls hidden beneath the apparently even surface of the *campo*. Those Americans had been expert riders, but this had not been their country, and they were strangers even to the soil itself.

The moral was plain enough; Randy had no place down here. He had engaged in a losing fight. He tried to tell himself that it had been thrust upon him; that he had stayed to try and recover his twenty-five thousand. Nor could he yet see what he had done that was wrong unless, as Captain Viéra had told him, he should have turned Manoel over to Hermanny. He shook his head. No, even if he had to do it over again, he would still act as he had acted before.

It was ten minutes after twelve when he topped the rise and walked the roan down the slope to the creek. Mariana had not arrived, so he trailed the reins, and while the roan grazed, stretched himself under a clump of brush. The sun was bright, but a *Pampero* was building —one of those cool, strong winds which sweep up across the Argentine pampas into the Mato Grosso, causing the temperatures to drop swiftly. A flight of small green parrots rode the winds and laid a splash of color across the sky. A *bem-te-vi,* a little yellow bird, settled on the roan's back and started searching for ticks.

In this pastoral solitude, Randy found it hard to believe that trouble existed. He smoked contentedly, trying not to think too much, but he couldn't help wondering what Mariana had on her mind. The roan whinnied nervously and raised her head. Randy sat up. A flock of emus dashed across the open *campo* on the other side of the creek and headed for a clump of *mato*. Randy glanced at his watch. Almost one o'clock. He rose to his feet, expecting to see Mariana ride over the crest of the hillock. But she did not come.

He mounted the roan and rode to the hump. There was no one in sight in any direction, and yet Randy had the queer feeling that he was not alone. Something was wrong. The *Pampero* was blowing harder, and off to the south he saw a thin spiral of smoke rising out of the grass. Fire! In this wind a grass fire would level the forage for miles!

With an oath, he tossed away a half-built cigarette, and touched spurs to the roan. Forgotten now were the armadillo holes. He dug with his spurs again and gave the roan her head. She was

more than willing. Perhaps she smelled the smoke, for she was bolting, her ears flat, body quivering. Randy leaned forward and covered his face against the slashing brush as they galloped through a patch of *mato*.

AGES later, he flashed past the outer buildings and pounded into the Figuereido yard. The corral gate was wide open and the horses gone. Randy heaved himself out of the saddle and made a run for the house. A saddled horse was tethered to a veranda post. With a sob of relief, he dashed into the house, shouting: "Mariana! Mariana!"

No answer! The door of the big living-room was open. He ran toward it, and stopped in the opening. The big table had been overturned. A broken chair lay in front of the fireplace. Randy absorbed those details without seeing them; his eyes were focussed on the body lying just inside the doorway.

It was Tuba! He lay on his back, one leg buckled under him and his head twisted the wrong way. His wizened old face wore an expression of innocent surprise. Randy knelt beside him. A heavy bullet, fired at close range, had taken him in the back of the neck, shattering the vertebrae, and coming out through the throat.

Randy stood up slowly and stared down at the body of this ancient who had served three generations of Figuereidos. A terrible numbness was settling over him. He wiped a hand over his forehead, and it came away wet and clammy. On the carpet, half hidden under the table, was a sheet of notepaper with the salutation *Randy* written in a precise feminine hand. Nothing else.

Mariana must have been writing him a note, he guessed, when someone had entered the room. Later Tuba had come in. He had started to leave the room, perhaps, when the visitor, or visitors, had shot him from behind. Mariana had resisted. God only knew what had happened to her! But Randy could guess.

Tuba's revolver was still in its holster. Randy removed it and thrust it inside his shirt. He checked the load of his own gun. There could only be one answer now.

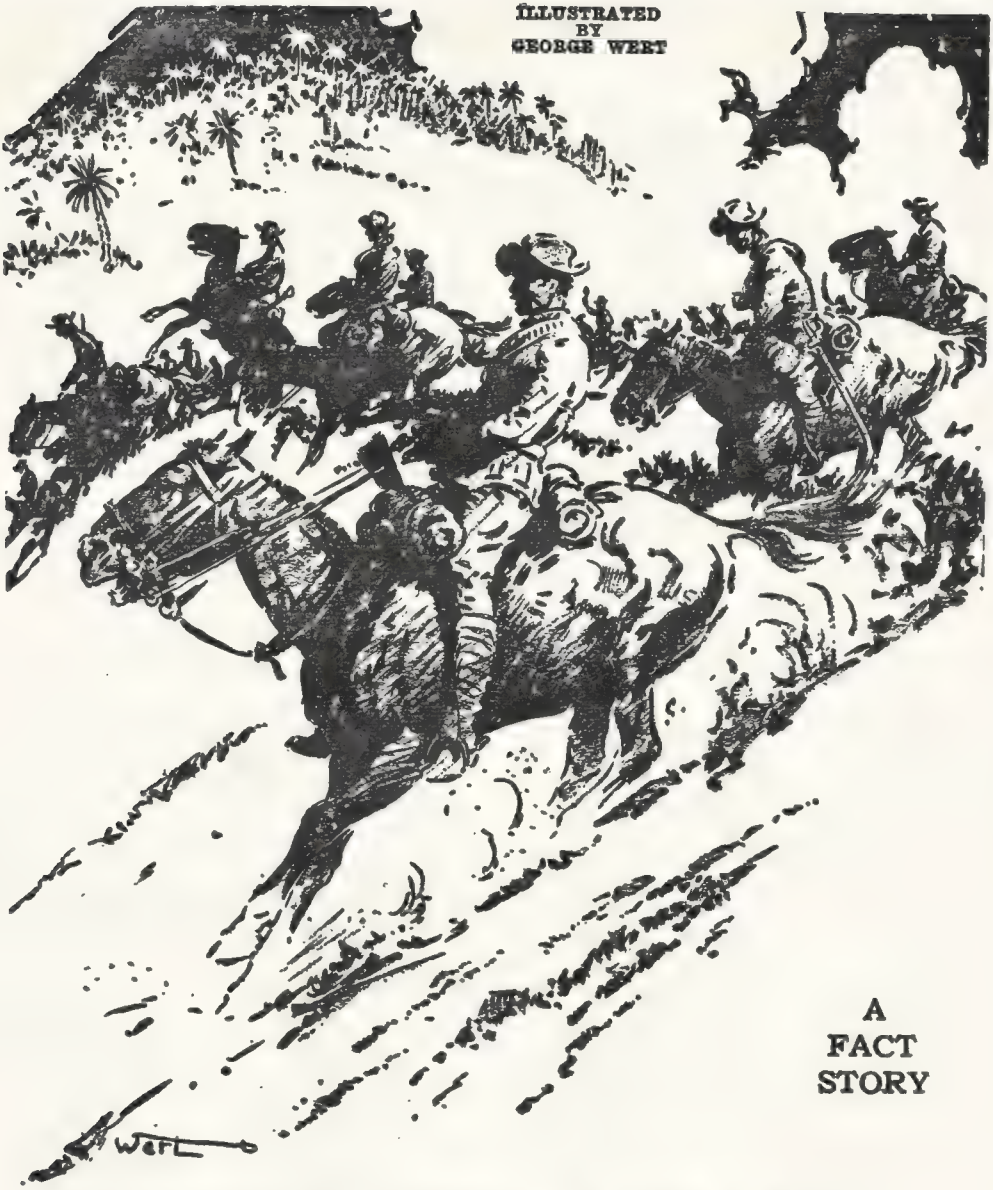
The wind was sweeping clouds of smoke across the *campo* in a low, flat screen as Randy came out onto the veranda. The waiting roan was jittery. Randy patted her neck reassuringly and mounted. Training had taught her that her job was down on the fire line, and she instinctively turned in that direction, but Randy swung her head the other way and dug in his spurs.

He was past caring about the ranch now.

(To be concluded)

Tuba's body lay just inside the doorway.

ILLUSTRATED BY GEORGE WERT



A FACT STORY

GUIDONS AWAY!

By W. M. KARTZMARK

DURING the second occupation of Cuba by American armed forces, 1906-1909, the mounted portion of the occupying forces consisted of the second and third squadrons of the 11th Cavalry—the second squadron stationed at Camp Columbia, Havana, Cuba, the third squadron at Pinar del Rio.

In February, 1908, by request of the Commanding Officer of the 11th Cavalry, and by order of the Commanding General of the Army of Cuban Pacification, Brigadier General Barry, the second squadron proceeded to Pinar del Rio to engage in target practice with the third squadron during the month of March,

and immediately thereafter to engage in field exercises with other organizations gathered in Pinar del Rio for that purpose.

During the month of March the horses had little exercise and no drill. It can, in fact, be stated that they practically stood on the picket line for the entire month, getting fat and lazy. Then for the first ten days of April these horses took part in field exercises of a most strenuous nature, demanding much of both men and mounts.

DURING the month of target practice, discussion raged among the officers of the regiment as to the amount of work that might be demanded of men and horses in the tropics. Opinion was so varied that the discussion almost attained the violent stage and by this time had reached down into the enlisted personnel to such an extent that bets were being laid as to mileage and results from men and horses on a forced march in the tropics. Finally the matter under discussion was laid before the commanding general through a request from two captains: Frank Parker commanding Troop F, and Frank Tompkins, commanding Troop G. They asked that they be allowed to conduct an experiment which would prove conclusively what could be done, instead of leaving it a mere matter of opinion and guesswork.

After careful study of the subject the commanding general authorized the return of Troops F and G, 11th Cavalry, from Pinar del Rio to Camp Columbia, Cuba, as rapidly as possible—consistent with maintaining horses and men in serviceable condition and ready for action at the end of the march. Several officers of the regiment suggested that ten selected men and horses be taken from each of the four troops of the second squadron and trained for the march. This plan was disapproved by the general, who stated that the feat was not to be undertaken by specially selected men and animals, but was to consist of bringing through an entire troop, fully equipped in heavy marching order, armed with rifle, saber and pistol—which, at the end of the march, should be ready for action.

Before the start of the test the commanding general cautioned the captains that it was not a race nor was it desired that they rush through with such men and horses as could make the trip, stringing the remainder of the troop along the road. Other than that, the conduct of the march was left entirely up to them, with the distinct understanding that if they saw their men and horses weakening they would cease competition and come in at a slower pace.

Troop G left Pinar del Rio at 12:00 midnight, April 11th, and arrived at Camp Columbia at 6:00 A. M., the 13th.

Troop F left Pinar del Rio at 6:00 P. M., April 12th, and arrived at Camp Columbia 12:00 midnight, April 13th.

The total distance covered was approximately one hundred and twenty-five miles, and the time thirty hours. The only difference between the two troops was that G Troop came through in a body, every man and horse present. It was met at the entrance to the camp by the camp commander and the band of the 27th Infantry, and marched into camp to the thrilling strains of martial music. The horses, tired as they were, pranced like colts to that music, and the men straightened in their saddles as though passing in review.

Troop F, on the other hand, disregarded the orders of the commanding general and only about eighty-five per cent of the troop came in during the thirty-hour period, the remainder of the men and horses straggling in during the next few hours.

THE plan of march followed by Troop F is not known, but the plan followed by Troop G—my own outfit—was as follows: the day before we started, the troop wagon with the teamster, one cook, and one kitchen police was started out on the route and the group ordered to keep on moving until the troop caught up with them, which we did about 2:00 P. M. the following day. We went into camp for four hours while the cook prepared a good hot meal for the men, and

the horses were well brushed down, watered and fed. We took up the march at 6:00 P. M. and the only halt between there and Camp Columbia was a thirty-minute stop about midnight to allow our captain to get over a severe attack of stomach cramps. In order that men and horses might be rested as much as possible on the march, we would ride our horses for a distance of seven kilometers, then dismount and walk for one kilometer, leading the horses. We found this excellent for taking the kinks out of tired muscles, and the horses seemed to appreciate it also.

At the conclusion of the march a careful personal examination by General Barry, also the Inspector General of the Army of Cuban Pacification, and the supervising veterinarian, revealed the fact that men and horses came through without injury, there being not even a sore back among the animals.

In comparing this with other famous rides it must be taken into consideration that this was not by a single horse and rider, nor by a small body of men and horses. Instead, it was performed by complete troops of cavalry, marching in formation as cavalry, in heavy marching order, and fully equipped for the field.

One other fact which must be considered is that scattered among the two troops were thirty-one men who had not as yet completed one year of service in the army.

Add, too, the fact that it was performed in the tropics and it becomes a remarkable feat of horsemanship—one worthy of recognition in any account of such rides.

FORMULA FOR FEAR

By
WILLIAM BRANDON

"INDICATIONS here in Washington," said the voice from the ancient, squealing radio, "are that the black market is reaching the proportions gangsterism did during prohibition. Officials here say that only the weight of public opinion can . . ." Static crackled and sputtered over the loudspeaker, far-off thunder mumbled among the mountains, the cabin trembling gently to it, and the packrat on the floor ran boldly across the man's outstretched hand. The hand didn't move and the rat stopped in the shelter of the radio and stood half erect, his front feet crossed over his paunch, and looked back at the man on the floor.

". . . as soon as it is realized that bootleggers of foodstuffs are directly aiding the enemy, as surely as though they . . ." The radio was battery powered and the battery sat on the floor under the rickety deal stand, and the packrat, investigating it, nibbled at a corner of the battery and moved on and came to a twisted wire. He bit at this and loosened a strip of insulation. He smelled it closely and then gripped it with his teeth again and yanked at it.

". . . for what they are, traitors to their country, traitors to their own brothers on the fighting battlefronts, men who . . ." The radio skirled and whistled and the packrat reared up suddenly, listening, hearing the sound of horses and men someplace outside, not far away, and coming nearer.

". . . and the problem of meat bootlegging threatening to become so serious as to dislocate the nation's entire war-

ILLUSTRATED BY
PETER KUHLHOFF

Eddar threw himself back, yelling, grabbing to get at the gun he carried in a spring holster.

time economy program . . . in this connection a spokesman for the Independent Meatpackers' Union today stated . . . "

The man on the floor groaned. The rat had fallen upon the wire again and now he stared nervously, his wary attention divided between the man on the floor and the approaching riders outside. With some show of urgency he returned to the wire.

". . . it would seem, indeed, that in these days when American boys are giving their blood, the lust for illicit dollars, at least, could be put aside . . ."

The radio went dead. The rat, worrying the wire furiously, lifted his head again to listen, vermilion threads of insulation dripping from his jaws. The voices were closer and one of the horses poked his nose to blow foam from his lips with a burst of sound and a ring of bridle metal that sent the packrat racing away to a corner, the insulating material streaming behind him. In the shadows the rat crouched, waiting.

Outside, a man shouted, "Cary! Ayyyyy, Cary!"

"His horses are gone," a girl's voice said. "Oh, darn, I knew he wouldn't be here."

"We might sight him on the way to Bukett's, if we hump it. He'll be out cowhunting here in the basin somewheres. He's gone from the shack, all right, or his radio would be playing."

The horses were walking on past the cabin, their hoofs thumping the hard packed sand.

"I know," the girl said. "And I thought I heard it a minute ago."

The man's voice, growing fainter, chuckled. "You wanted to hear it, young'un, that's the reason."

Their talk drifted on and away, leaving silence except for the occasional growl of distant thunder rolling across the mountains. The rat crept out presently and attacked the wire once more. He had pulled it loose from the battery and now he tried to drag it away, but the weight of the radio still tethering it was too much for him. He finally settled himself over the wire, impatiently hunched, prepared to tear it apart strip by strip.

CARY LONGSTREET awoke to a confused presence in two worlds, both of them wavering and unnatural, and neither of them real. He was getting "T" Two ready for the Fat Stock Show and at the same time, somehow, he was back in college arguing with someone—a man he couldn't quite place; a man in a cowhide vest, a man with a face like a pear, big and solid across the chin and narrowing at the brows—about Hegel's Philosophy of History.

The man was smiling and laughing and nodding, the pear shaped face squeezed into a rubbery grin, the hard little eyes ironic, and T Bar Two, the second of the famous T Bar bulls, was standing square as a piano crate while Cary polished his horns with a wool rag and linseed oil, and brushed his hide the wrong way of the grain to curl the hair, and parted the hair along the backbone with a comb. All bull, this calf, aristocrat of the range, with a pedigree crowded with perfectly nicking bloodlines, free from an outcross for twenty generations. The long black hair waved smooth and glossy under the round currycomb, the comb catching the tips of the hair and brushing up, brushing up, with an even, practised stroke . . . but there was also the fat man in the cowhide vest and he was also, somehow, at college, because he could hear his roommate, Stewart, snoring—or was that old King, the cribbing horse his father had owned? But King had been dead since. . . . The man's pear shaped face was squeezed into a rubbery grin and the bull calf was shimmering like caracul under the brushing, and Stewart's snores went on and on and on, endlessly . . .

The scene blacked out suddenly and his eyes struggled open and he was looking across rough plank flooring at a packrat gnawing on a wire. The rat sat up and looked back at the man nervously.

"Hiya, fella," Cary said. He grinned. The rat backed away a foot or so and whirled around and scurried to a corner.

The man on the floor laughed and the laugh changed to a cough and his head sagged. He flattened a palm on the floor to push himself up and the hand slipped in blood.

A wave of sickness rose in his throat and receded and he felt then the numbness in his back and the pain in his left shoulder. He forced himself half erect and, swaying so, reached over his shoulder with his right hand and wrapped his fingers around the hilt of a knife buried in his back.

Astonishment came in his eyes and he said aloud, "Good Lord." Muscles knotted under his shirt and he pulled the knife free. He felt fresh blood trickle down his back and a spasm shook his shoulders and was a long time passing.

It was a hunting knife and the blade was smeared with red. A few threads from his shirt were snagged at the base of the hilt.

He breathed deeply twice and, slowly, reaching out with each arm for support, at last dragged himself to his feet. He stood a while tentatively twisting and rubbing his shoulders and back.

The knife had sliced into the deltoid muscle, been deflected by his shoulder blade, and cut downward then into the latissimus dorsi. This much he deduced from what he could feel, the area of numbness and the area of pain, and from the muscular action affected. It was therefore more a long shallow cut than a stab wound, and so not immediately serious.

Be rational about it.

That made him think of Anna and he grinned again, wryly, and moved, staggering a little, to the bucket of water in the rude sink against the wall.

He was still suffering from shock, he knew that, but he would drive it away that much sooner by rationally maintaining what clarity of perception he had so far. In a moment the shock would drift completely away and he would remember it all without confusion. Probably then also would come severe headaches and nausea, and if he could clean the wound well enough to minimize fever, those effects would not be too bad.

The man in the cowhide vest . . . the man in the cowhide vest with the flat pear shaped face . . . why, hell, he was only Mr. Eddar, of the Eddar Truck-

ing Company, in Jordan. And the two Mexicans and the red headed kid with the limp, they were Mr. Eddar's truck drivers . . .

And the red headed kid with the limp had been the one with the knife.

He soused water on the wound and another spasm wrenched him and he dropped the wet rag and sat down on a three legged chair.

"Good Lord," he said again, and the last trace of unconsciousness went away and memory returned.

He got up again after a while and went on with washing the wound. Methodically, rationally, only his eyes were warm and reflective and hastening on a little ahead of his reasoning.

CARY LONGSTREET'S father had been a rich man with a hobby of stock breeding. When he died he left his son a Shorthorn family already famous in the East, and little else. With it, Cary went West. What had been his father's hobby he made his business. He was good at it and he would be better and he knew it. He knew how to plan and he knew how to administer his plans with method and efficiency. In many ways he was a better business man than his father had been, and in time he would probably make almost as much money, and keep considerably more of it.

"It's been a great surprise to me," he said once to Anna, "that you don't cotton to me like you should. I'm quite a guy. You must have some emotional block."

"You haven't," Anna replied tartly. "Adding machines don't have emotions and you'll make some woman a lovely adding machine."

He was a tall, loose jointed young man, wearing glasses and speaking in an Eastern drawl, when he bought in the T Bar. Now the glasses were gone, but otherwise he was unchanged. His easy-going manner concealed a cold and bloodless passion for detail and accuracy that drove his outfit to a new record each year for beef pounds per acre per man hour. Anna had once made the obscure remark that he still wore the glasses he had come West with, only you couldn't see them now without looking twice.

Well, this country was still young and callow, and Anna's thoughts were often childish ones, a form of play. She didn't realize, perhaps, that he worked hard and was too tired for games. With the war, now, he'd been tired since Pearl Harbor. If the Army traveled on its stomach, the stomach traveled in some part on beef from his T Bar outfit, beef tallowed with his own sweat. Beef fresh from the summer range, grassers without benefit of feed lots and finishing, and that was when the bloodlines showed, and the method and efficiency and precision of all his plans.

The packrat was hunkering back in a corner under some shelves, watching him, while Cary wrote a note to leave in the shack. Anna and Sam B., her father, were riding down today, they had said, and going on through to Burkett's, the other side of Dode Miller's. It was almost dark, they should have been here by now, and surely they would show up before long. He couldn't wait for them but he'd leave the note and they could come on after him with help, if they did stop by. In the meantime . . . he got out a U. S. Geological Survey map of the area and studied it intently, measuring with the web of his thumb. Decisions drawn at length, he put the map in his pocket and took time to unwind carefully the strips of sheeting he had wrapped around his chest for a bandage, and wash and dress and bind the cut again as well as he could. The numbness was drawing in now and his left arm was leaden and heavy and socketed in pain, but it could still be used.

He poked up the fire in the little chunk stove, laid a piece of wire over it with one end in the flame, and went about capturing the rat in the corner. It wasn't difficult; he had been planning it with a part of his mind for the last few minutes.

He balled up the bandage he had just removed and tossed it to the rat's left and when it leaped in the other direction he pushed a can of salt off a shelf to fall in front of it and the rat, con-

fused now and panicky, whirled again and then charged with blind courage straight ahead. Having intended this as the rat's eventual position, Cary was ready with the bucket upended in the sink. He lifted it with one hand and slammed it down to the floor as the rat came at him, and took it prisoner.

With a stick of kindling wood he then stunned the rat and taking the piece of wire from the stove, the tip of which was by now red hot, he branded the rat on the right flank with a pretty fair "T," threw it in a gunny sack and started out.

HIS back gave him considerable pain when he started to walk but he didn't think much about it. He was too busy calculating time, contours, distances, and wondering if the Burkett Ford and the Billy Ford were still mean to cross.

If they were, Eddar and his truck drivers would have to unload at each crossing, wade the steers over and load again, and you could safely allow for one truck getting stuck for a while at each creek, and that should give him plenty of time, even with their start of two hours or so.

But to bank on that meant to bank largely on luck, the unforeseeable factors of chance. Cary didn't like to rest plans on any such abstract foundations.

It was better to assume that luck would go against him and that the trucks would make the fords without more loss of time than an hour. Even so, their only way out of the basin forced them to circle south and north and south again, to bring them out finally through Leed's Canyon, and that would be only eight or ten miles from built roads—his last chance to stop them.

But even giving them good time across the fords they couldn't reach the canyon in less than five hours, four and a half at the inside.

While on foot a man could cross the basin rim to the canyon in an hour or so—if he could climb Leed's Hill.

These were the constituents of the tactic. The result was as heavily weighted in his favor, he knew, as were the odds on any plans he made. It was a matter only of coolness and method, of never doing anything without a reason, of never thinking anything without a reason, of carefully judging the limits of your execution and asking for only that much and no more.

The sand of the basin floor was smooth and hard packed and made for easy walking; it was thick dusk now and brush clumps and cactus stood around him like quiet, spectral people, sitting here and there on the sand, quietly watching him pass. Leed's Hill sat against the afterglow like a bishop's hat, two steepled peaks and a gorge between. Lee's Hill was top dog of the foothills; from its flank the mountains piled away higher and higher to the east in a towering purple mass. Now they were blocky, hazy shadows, and thunder was faintly stewing and boiling some place deep in their belly.

The basin never looked large after sundown. It reminded him of the Yale Bowl at this time, because the enormity of the mountains and foothills dwarfed the valley floor and made thirty miles look like a hundred yards, and the peaks of the bishop's hat became goal posts. He walked on, with the rat swinging in its sack from his belt. He walked slowly, the important thing being to rate himself; his mind turned constantly on the problem in hand, the important thing being to avoid the wasteful effort of remembrance of Eddar and his truck drivers at his wire with their load of Dode Miller's steers. Of Eddar saying "go back to your curly haired show cows, kid, don't monkey with our business" . . . Of the red headed, limping kid with the knife.

These things must be shut out and closed out and kept out; they were inefficient and unnecessary thoughts, thoughts that would get in his way, and it was his policy never to do anything without a reason, never to think anything without a reason. His mind now would be on the problem in hand, Leed's Hill.

It would not be long before he would be going upgrade, starting the first slope of Leed's. He knew the hill well from distant study; he had always liked rock

climbing and he had been hoping for a chance some day to try the west face of Leed's, and had looked the hill over often while riding through the basin.

The first long slope sharpened into an arete that looked easy and a chimney above that opened suddenly into what appeared to be the only interesting part of the hill, a weather channeled slab of bare rock that stood like a giant barn door, and above it the barn roof: the peaked top slope, apparently easy.

You could miss the barn door face by climbing out either north or south, but if you did that you would not get over the hump of the hill in an hour or in two hours, for that matter, but would have to go all the way around one or the other of the twin peaks . . . while if you made the face you could cross between them.

The face didn't look very bad, at that, but without ropes and without shoes—he would kick off his boots as soon as he left the sand—it could get tough.

Then there was that persistent thought, trying to intrude with each shock of the pain in his back muscles, that he was overestimating the strength left him, that he was going ahead on guts, which meant emotion, instead of on rational judgment.

That would be fear and the cold reason he had always trusted told him there was no ground for it. He had investigated the wound and knew what the knife had done to him and he had calculated the extent to which he would have to call upon himself, and after objective consideration he had reached the decision—based on facts alone—that he could do it.

It was a simple matter, this business of calculation. An adding machine could do it, and adding machines did not make wrong guesses. Anna often said so.

A simple mathematical matter of adding this to this and balancing against that. Clean and uncluttered, no place for emotion, no place for guts, any more than in the business of keeping books or arranging feeding schedules or choosing the proper time to put the weights on "T" Two's horns.

It was important only to keep his head clear, and so far there was no sign of de-

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lirium, none at all. But he would have to rate his pace and rest often, and plan his ascent of the face minutely. It would not be good to get himself in a spot that would require over-exertion. It would not be good to get up there and lose your stuff. To get up there and be tired and start thinking of meeting Eddar and his truck drivers today at the wire . . .

THE arete and chimney were surprisingly easy. He was climbing very well. Using one arm, sparing his left side, and the rat hanging at his belt lowered his center of gravity and gave a little more to his balance, so even it was helping him.

He came out of the chimney and thought he must be going up too fast, but it seemed easy and he wasn't tired. The cut was bleeding again, though, and the pain sawed back and forth under the grab of the soggy binding. He began to wish he was over the barn door and went up the first few feet of the wall quickly, like a swimmer diving in cold water. The face offered ledges but the rock was old and rotten and treacherous and progress here became very slow.

Then the wind got to him as he went higher still. It was strong up here, spilling in a steady roaring rush down to the valley far below and it pushed against him like a giant hand playfully nudging at his balance on the narrow ledges.

"Take it easy, chum," he said out loud. "You're still rushing it."

He had a long way yet to go. The wall leaned out above him, on up and up until it melted into the darkness; leaning out because he hugged against its base and perspective made it overhang, as when you stand beside a tall building and look up. He was climbing the Empire State and he was now at the twentieth floor. Cary Longstreet, the human fly. The ledges were windowsills and he clung to one with his toes and heard the thunder still moving lazily down from the mountains, and saw the flicker and flare of lightning drawing closer in the east. A quick storm here and slick rock and a chill, that wouldn't be good either.

He pushed on and was stopped, with nothing above but bare wall. He worked back and tried again to one side and made a few feet more and was stopped again. His legs were trembling. This was the time he found himself scared, the fear rolling in the pit of his stomach. He worked back once more, the fear whispering with the wind that whipped his hair. He started on by a different route, the fear trembling with his bare feet that sought new precarious unseen footholds. Now the height was lonely and the sky, full of night clouds, was brushing his shoulders, and he knew that if he could not go on he would not be able to backtrack his way down either.

But he had studied this wall through binoculars. He knew there was a way. He had climbed it in his mind. He would not have started up if his reason had not told him . . .

On the fourth try he found the way and the fear ran from him when he was climbing on again.

He was surprised when he suddenly came over the edge and was on the barn roof, between the two rock steeples.

It had been easier, all told, than he had expected.

He reached the canyon floor two hours ahead of the trucks. They had apparently had some trouble at the fords.

He spent the time resting by the mountain stream that trickled down the canyon. He washed the knife cut again and made the preparations he had planned for the trucks.

It was a simple arrangement. The trucks had to maneuver the canyon narrows, at a bend choked halfway across with scrub pine. Rocks fell now and then down the canyon walls and rolled into the narrows. It would not excite Eddar's suspicion to come on boulders here in this part of the trail.

With a heavy green branch for a pry Cary rolled a few large rocks into the middle of the narrows and made a pile of them high enough to stop a truck.

Then he went back by the stream to rest. He concealed himself in the brush.

THE trucks were keeping close together, four pairs of headlights b u m p i n g cautiously down the canyon trail. He heard the bellowing of the steers before he heard the grinding motors, and he sat

up and watched without moving until the first truck reached the narrows and stopped. The driver got out to move the pile of rocks aside. Cary heard the man swearing wearily. He heard the cab door slam.

Then he was on his feet, moving to the truck, keeping out of the headlight sweep of the other trucks now pulled up behind. He drew from his belt the wide bladed hunting knife the red headed kid had left in his back. The hilt felt cold in the grip of his hand.

At the front fender of the lead truck, crouching, he slashed the front tire. Air plunged out with a hiss and the sound was drowned by the idling engine, the restless tromp and mutter of the load of steers.

He faded back again into the brush to watch. Eddar was the one he wanted. A fat man in a cowhide vest, with a rubbery pear shaped face. He wasn't in the first truck. One of the Mexicans was driving there.

The steers began to bawl, their nervousness increased by the storm that was now hanging almost over them, lightning licking down from the low banked clouds, big bodied drops of rain plopping here and there.

The driver got the boulders out of the way and returned to his cab. The column started up again, with a roaring of motors, and Cary waited motionless in the brush while the trucks rolled on a few yards and stopped once more.

The first driver got out of his cab and went around to his tires. He stood by his right front fender and cupped his hands to his mouth and shouted back to his companions, and Cary watched as the other drivers left their cabs.

He had thought Eddar would be in the last truck. He saw the man step from his cab and drop to the ground heavily and start forward, and Cary ran toward him.

He turned the knife blade up in his hand and held it stiff armed at his hip.

Rain thickened and pelted down and then cut loose with a rush, a long shivering rip of lightning and a rolling blast of thunder that actually seemed to split the earth.

Eddar was starting to trot, turning

Helpers on the Hill

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his shirt collar up around his neck, the cowhide vest flapping as he ran. A stream of water was already running from the rolled brim of his hat.

Cary, running, came up behind him. Go back to your curly haired T Bar champions, sonny, don't monkey with us. Go raise your ribbons. Don't get in our way.

"Eddar," Cary said. He put his hand on Eddar's rainsoaked shoulder and the man stopped suddenly and spun around and Cary put the knife against his belly.

"Off the trail," Cary said. Eddar's face was white through the curtain of rain. "Off the trail," Cary said. He punched the point of the knife through Eddar's shirt and hide.

Eddar threw himself back, yelling, grabbing with one hand to hold open his vest, with the other to get at the gun he carried in a spring holster.

Cary brought the knife up, blade up, and it hit where he wanted it to, laying Eddar's right arm open to the bone. He followed it up and while Eddar screamed and flung his arm in wild arcs, blood spraying from it, Cary reached under his vest and took his gun and fired into the rain, at the movement ahead there in the trucks' shimmering lights that was Eddar's drivers coming in answer to his yell. He fired again and heard the bullet clang on metal, and the drivers' darting figures disappeared.

"You're the boss," Cary said to Eddar. "You're the one I want." Eddar was bent over hugging himself, rocking his wounded arm. He turned up his pear-shaped face, his eyes blank and rabid, and screamed that he would die. "Not before we get to town," Cary said. "I didn't get an artery. Turn around, we'll go in one of the trucks."

He stepped back and untied the packrat from his belt. "You'll want this too," he said. "It's an animal with my brand on it."

ANNA rode out of the rain and Sam B. was close behind her, jumping his chestnut over the rocks, before he got Eddar to a truck. Anna sat in her saddle and Sam B. jumped down and threw the chestnut's reins over his head and scrambled up on bowed legs, his eyes wide and astounded, and then Anna swung down and Cary put out a hand and leaned against her horse's wither.

"Your note," she said. Her voice was thin and breathless through the drum of the rain and she put her hands on his arms. "We got it; we stopped in the cabin on our way back because we saw your horses running loose, and . . ."

"It's very simple," Cary said. "They've been stealing my beef. I'd have let the law handle it, but there wasn't time. But it all worked out very well."

"Stealing—but Mr. Eddar is a business man. We know him. He isn't any rustler!"

"There's a thing called the black market. They're paying a dollar and a half a pound for beef through it, so I hear. That's quite a profit. It could make a man a millionaire."

Eddar had fallen to his knees. The rat was hanging around his neck, where Cary had tied it. Sam B. was wrapping something around the wounded arm.

"But how did you—?"

"Dode Miller's been hazing my steers over onto his place and running the brand into the Circle Cross he had registered last year. I happened on to these four trucks coming through the wire today with these loads from Miller's and I recognized the steers. You can see that a stamping iron made the 'T' part of the brands they're wearing and a running iron turned the mark into Miller's Circle Cross. When I faced Eddar with it he ran away with my horses and one of his drivers knifed me. They probably figured if they could get this load away to their slaughterhouse they could cover up the next shipment some other way. The profit's worth taking chances for. As Mr. Eddar said, none of the steers had my mark on them. He told me to wait until I found him carrying an animal with my brand and then try to stick a charge on him. It seemed to strike him funny."

"Did you say they knifed . . . where are you hurt?"

Sam B. came up carrying the unconscious packrat by the tail.

"It's all right," Cary said. "I've taken care of it."

"But you got over here from your place, and you—"

"I worked it out. The important point is," he said earnestly, "to keep your reasoning uncluttered. You see, I—"

"The fella's out of his head," Sam B. said. "Get in one of those trucks, young 'un, and see if you can find a blanket."

"No," Cary said, "my head's all right. That was the main thing I watched. I couldn't have planned it and—"

"Of course he's all right, Dad," Anna said. "You know he always is."

"I said get him a blanket," Sam B. roared. "Can't you see how he is?"

"Yes," Anna said. "He's not in the least excited and everyone else is, and that's the way it will always be because Cary is a reasoning machine, aren't you, Cary? He's just been telling us how he planned it all. I don't know yet how he did it, but that just shows how cold and reasonable his planning was, and—"

Sam B. turned on her. "You gone loco too? The boy's been cut with a knife, and . . ." he peered at his daughter through the rain and put a thumb under her chin to lift up her face . . . "what in the name of hell are you standing there crying about? Go do something for him, don't stand there and cry about it!"

"He doesn't need anyone to do something for him," Anna said.

She had been worried about him, Cary thought, and she was semi-hysterical and suffering the emotional reaction of relief. He was glad they hadn't arrived sooner. She might have upset his arrangements. But Sam B. was howling at her and shaking his fists above his head, and the rat dangling from his hand swayed in front of his face.

He spun around to Cary and held up the rat and shouted, "What's this damned thing for?"

"Why, it's an animal with my brand on it," Cary explained seriously. He showed them the brand. "Mr. Eddar said when I found him with an animal with my mark on it, he . . . he . . ."

"But it's a rat!"

"I know. I'm just trying to remember the way I planned it. You see, I thought it all out, and the rat . . ." He rubbed a thumb against his temple. "The rat . . . It was clear at the time, but . . ."

"Cary!" Anna cried, trying to see his eyes. She broke away from him and ran to the trucks. Sam B. was laughing and he hurled the rat away and helped Cary after Anna to the trucks.

"You're delirious, my boy," he shouted. "You're crazier'n a bat! Tyin' a rat on Eddar's neck—a T Bar rat!" Choking with laughter he boosted Cary into the truck and went back to get Eddar to his feet.

"No," Cary was saying. "I know exactly what I'm doing. I'm all right."

Anna was in the darkness of the cab's interior, searching behind the seat for blankets. She was sobbing and laughing and trying at the same time to tell him something, and Cary let her lower him to the seat and pillow his head on someone's coat that smelled of motor oil. He was very tired and he would be asleep quickly as soon as he could get warm, but he was well pleased with himself. It only took a little thought, a little calculation, and his plans worked out. Even with women, who were unpredictable. Even with Anna.

WAR BONDS ARE WAR WEAPONS—

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THE CAMP-FIRE

Where readers, writers and adventurers meet

ONLY three recruits to the ranks of our Writers' Brigade this month. We'll call on them to report in the order in which they make their first appearance on the contents page. The author of "The Pig-Boat and the Pup" lives in Westchester now while he recuperates from a bout with malaria, but he's been plenty of places and done plenty of things out of range of New York's metropolitan area. A. H. Hoenninger writes—

To give a few pertinent facts about myself that might be suitable for Camp-Fire becomes harder and harder the more I think of it.

In the first place, if I were to dwell only on the highlights of my checkered career, it may sound as though I had lived a very exciting life so far. But the truth would be that most of the time I have lived in those shadowy valleys between the peaks where life goes on evenly, motivated by hard routine jobs that are the same the world over. The only difference between me and my next door neighbor is that I traveled a lot further than he to find those jobs.

It all started when I was sixteen and made my first trip to Cuba, and has been going on ever since, with the exception of the four years I spent in college. Even those four years were split in two by a year spent in South America between my Sophomore and Junior years. There has been a consistency about my peregrinations. I have always chosen our good neighbors to the south, until now there are only two American republics that I have not visited. But I still have plenty of time to rectify those omissions.

The jobs I've had? They are as varied as the countries I have visited. They run all the way from timekeeper on a railroad—not much of a railroad, I'll admit—to mule buyer, to overseer of a banana farm, to Spanish-English translator, to real estate agent, and on up—or down—to advertising copywriter.

However, out of all this welter of working and living in Latin America has come one real passion. I believe America is on the verge of producing a civilization that will be distinctly her own. And please note that I refuse to divide America into north and south. We are one continent physically in spite of the Panama Canal. What is more important, we are fast becoming one continent in thought. The ultimate in Continental Solidarity.

If I, in my own small way, can bring about a better understanding among

Americans by writing interesting, yet authentic, fiction about the different countries I have lived in I will be satisfied.

I knew I shouldn't have started on Pan-Americanism; because I never know when to stop. But you *Adventure* readers are luckier than most people I meet. There is a bottom edge to this column, but I'm not going to try to reach it.

Hasta la vista.

W. M. KARTZMARK, who adds with "Guidons Away!" a new chapter to the catalogue of accounts of speed trials on horseback we have been publishing from time to time, has crammed a heap of living into his three score and two. He says—

It's a thrill to hit the *Adventure* bulls-eye with the first thing I have ever set down on paper. So gangway brothers of Camp-Fire while I throw my chunk of fat-pine on the fire and then retire to the outer circle.

Born 1881 in the city of "Dem Bums." Orphaned at 8, went to grandfather in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada until I was 13. Then practically on my own. Finished grammar and part of high school. Worked at everything under the sun until I was 20, then took notice of the Spanish-American War and enlisted in the American Army. Twelve years army life, Philippines, Cuba, Alaska, and in U. S. Couple of years on my own in Alaska, prospecting, fishing, hunting. Back to State of Washington, three years stevedoring, shipping clerk. Finished high school and special course while stevedoring. With U.S. Customs on International border 14 years, with an interlude of one year when during the World War was commissioned and sent —of all places—back to Alaska! How I wish I were up there now. Doctors say no can do. Service with U.S. Customs all during prohibition days. (Some Daze.)

Retired account physical disability 1931. Doctors said three years to live. Colorado Desert of California for nine months. Learned to walk again, drive car and other useful things. Absorbed all the lure of the desert, its stories of lost mines, ghost stories and others. Also acquired an intense love for everything connected with the desert. La Mesa, California three and a half years until doctors ordered me out of there. Got mad, bought a trailer, and have pretty well covered this wonderful country of ours, all of Canada, and parts of Mexico, some 165,000 miles in all. Usually back to desert in winter for more prospecting. Married to one of those women men sometimes dream about. She would rather go prospecting, fishing or hunting with me, than call on the Queen. A son with the R.C.A.F. Hobbies were fishing, hunting and prospecting till health broke. The big fellows in Alaska and British Columbia, and the birds in fall in northern Alberta. Still do a little fishing. Present hobby, collecting of rare, old and antique buttons, of which I now have a pretty good collection.

As for the background of "Guidons Away!"—

My captain—Frank Tompkins, as fine a troop commander as ever served in the army—questioned me during the time the ride was aborning as to where the men had gotten the idea of a forced march back to camp. Naturally I denied there was any such talk in the troop. He quickly shot another one at me, "Well, what do you think the men would say to such a ride?" and without thinking I blurted out, "Well, we are all ready and raring to go." Then he laughed at me. How we went I've put on the record. I wonder if there are any other old "G" troopers who still remember that ride?

LAST month in this department we mentioned a prize boner we had pulled in the April issue and decided, as long as only one alert reader had caught it so far, to postpone our confession-session till now and give others a chance to crack down on us. Mr. E. Stanley Johnson of Onawa, Maine still holds the fort alone, however, so we'll do our head-hiding-in-shame without more delay. Here's what he wrote—

Dear Sir:—

There is no other magazine quite like *Adventure*. Except for the "Off the Trail" yarns, it is authentic. If I read anything in *Adventure* I can believe it and I can quote it. Also I can enjoy it.

Hal. G. Evarts wrote a good story in the April issue. *A Pretty Smart Greek.* I wonder if he made the title that way because the Greek was *not* so smart as he seemed to *think* he was. He thought the pistol that had been under water would be useless. It wasn't a flint-lock, was it? The picture looked like a Mauser—not

a Luger. Anyway, either the Greek or Hal Evarts erred because a pistol used by modern Germans will not be put out of action because of a brief immersion.

Will you please tell me who made the error. It would be almost unforgivable in a smart writer like Evarts, but we can forgive the Greek!

Yours truly,
—E. Stanley Johnson,
Box 54, Onawa, Maine.

The original title of the Evarts story was "Labyrinth" and we're responsible for changing it to "A Pretty Smart Greek" but, much as we'd like to, we can't avow that the change was prompted by any wish to make the hero less smart than he really was or to take care of any errors in gun-talk. Instead of passing the buck to the Greek we passed it to the author and here's how Mr. Evarts answers Reader Johnson, on stationery of Service Command Unit 1943, Fort MacArthur, Cal. where he is now in training to be an M. P.—

Dear Mr. Johnson:—

Thank you for your letter anent my story "A Pretty Smart Greek" in the April *Adventure*.

You very properly raise the question of whether the German's pistol would or would not fire after immersion in water. The error, if it is an error, belongs to me, and not to the editor or the Greek hero. Both are supposed to be smarter than the author at least.

The point is one which I have heard debated by fiction writers without satisfaction. Frankly, I don't know. The only way to prove it is to place a German pistol in water for a brief period—say five minutes—then pull the trigger. And *I* don't know anyone who has actually submitted any gun to such a test, although there may be many.

The German, if you recall, was in water for some time. Afterward in the dark he had no opportunity to clean or dry or even drain the pistol. I'll concede that his first cartridge *might possibly* fire, but I believe his gun would jam after that.

I have posed the question to our platoon, most of whom have had more than average experience with guns of all types, and the opinion varies. The sergeant, however, says "damned if I'd shoot the gold-plated thing," and in this man's Army that's good enough for me. Hope this point didn't mar your enjoyment of the yarn.

Sincerely yours,
—Hal G. Evarts.

We'd like to hear from anyone who has performed the experiment the sergeant shied away from.

Incidentally, the gun *was* a Mauser, standard equipment in the German army —not a Luger.

WE'RE sorry now we ever stuck our neck out and expressed even the faintest dubiety—nay, even curiosity—about where Dick Wetjen garnered those fabulous "lushberries" he used to such good advantage in "Raid on Jigger's Reef" back in the February issue. And we're full of humility now and want to extend thanks to Messrs. Wagner, Whitton and Wiggins for batting our ears down about it and putting us in our place properly. Witness—

Dick Wetjen's "lushberries" do exist and were formerly used in medicine although not a U. S. P. drug. Their action is sedative if taken internally and they are used externally in decoction as an insecticide, particularly the vermin on the human body. In a Materia Medica which I used while a pharmacist they are described as follows:

"Cacculus Indicus (official name) Fish berries, India berries, Oriental berries (common names). Seed of Anamirta Paniculata. Natural order Merrispermacea Tinosporea. Habitat: East India.

"Description: Globular kidney shaped, about 10 mm. (2-5 in.) long and 6 mm. (1-4) thick, blackish brown. Wrinkled.

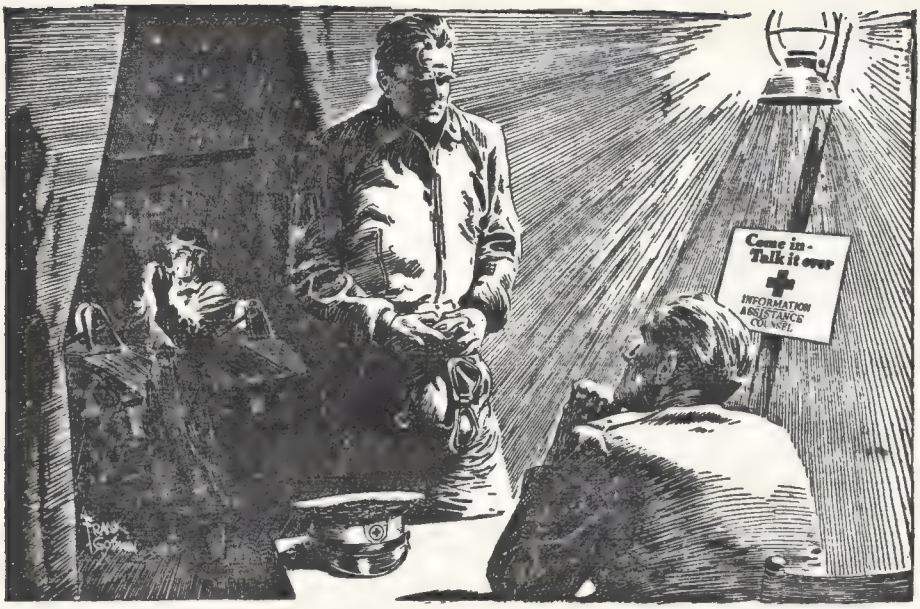
"Properties: Nervine, Sedative. Uses: Externally in parasitic skin diseases. Insecticide. Also used as a fish poison. Technically used to prevent secondary fermentation of alcoholic liquor, but this use is very dangerous. Poison. Dose 1 to 3 grains as powder or tinct."

I have omitted those parts of the description which would be of interest only to a pharmacologist or botanist.

In parts of South America the natives use a root of a certain plant the same way for catching fish. The popular garden insecticide, rotenone, is made from this same plant. See "Reader's Digest," May, 1940, page 25. Or "This Week" magazine, April 14, 1940.

I hope that this will clear up any

(Continued on page 120)



"I'm worried about Ma..."

This boy is a casualty.

A few days ago, he was a hardened fighting man—with a glint in his eye and a set to his mouth that boded ill for his Axis foes.

Tonight he's just a bewildered lad. Bad news from home has hit him—and put him out of action—as effectively as an enemy bullet. Desperately he has tried to solve a problem back home; his mother ill, lonely, helpless—and apparently nothing he can do about it.

Tortured by doubt and uncertainty, he's come to the Red Cross Field Director for help. He'll get it.

It is the job of Red Cross Field Men to unravel human snarls. Across their desks, sometimes no better than battered crates, more than 1,500,000 men in the past year have poured their troubles—have asked for and received counsel and assistance. Daily and nightly, with our armed forces from Africa to India, from Iceland to New Guinea, they are keeping up the morale our fighting men *must* have.

Not only to the fighting men but to War's victims wherever they can be reached the Red Cross is carrying relief supplies, clothing, medicines. The cost is tremendous and ever-increasing.

The Second War Fund is greater than the First, but no greater than the increased needs.

Give more this year—give double if you can.

Your Dollars help make possible the

AMERICAN RED CROSS

This space contributed by the Publisher

(Continued from page 118)

doubts in your mind as to Dick's "lush-berries." They really do exist.

Very truly yours,
—James H. Wagner,
183 E. Main St.,
Chilton, Wis.

And this from a Massachusetts reader—

In the March issue of ADVENTURE I ran across Dick Wetjen's letter about Ope or Oap.

The Oap, and that is the way it is spelled, is found in the mountainous Caroline Archipelago, a slender, straight-limbed plant used by the natives to catch fish.

The process is to tie a bunch of these slender branches together, beat them until they start to run milky-white juice. Tie them into a small bundle of leaves about the size of an orange and take them out on the reef. We'll say we have a pool that is just about a forest of coral with silvery mullet near the surface; beneath them yellow-finned rock-cod up to thirty pounds, with a sprinkling of wrasse, parrot and other rock fish. A colorful collection.

The natives then jump into the water, and near the bottom, rip open the Oap bundles. Within several minutes the fish begin to show up out of the milky mixture. The big ones may be only stunned, but are easily gaffed.

Yes, Dick is right.

Very truly yours.
—Leon G. Whitton
15 Claremont Ave.,
Haverhill, Mass.

And the following from our *Ask Adventure* staff member, Ol' Man Wiggins of Oregon—

In Dick Wetjen's yarn of the South Seas, and the doping of the Nips by some herb the natives knew, I was reminded of what we called the "Indian fishing weed" in days past in Oklahoma Territory. It was a wild growth of some sort, stupefying in its nature, that grew wild in the timber, and was cultivated by some people, both red and white.

While it was contrary to law to use or even grow it, yet a clerk we had seemed unduly familiar with its use. He said the common method of use was to get in a boat where the water was a few feet in depth, and drive a stake down till the flat head was an inch or so above the surface of the pond. Then the green weed was placed on the flat head of the stake, beaten with a flat surfaced club till the juice seeped down into the water, and a few moments later, the stupefied fish would float up, to be caught by hand or arrows and placed in the boat. He said the flavor was not injured, nor did the narcotic seem to affect the eaters, and the fish untaken soon recovered and swam away, perfectly all right.

—Donegan Wiggins
170 Liberty Road,
Salem, Ore.

So that's that—and are we chastened—but thoroughly!

THE following interchange of letters relative to the bibulous fantasy we printed in our April issue may amuse you as it did us. John Wilstach is himself an author. His last story in *Adventure* appeared back in 1929. Here's what he writes—

The story "For Drinking Men Only" by James Vale Downie is enough to make even a teetotaler thirsty—and as the author hates butter-milk I suppose he was reduced, while writing it—even worse than reading it—to nice cold spring water. I know I took several drinks—of spring water—from the thirst it raised. There is one point, however, that makes me believe that the character in the yarn never drank any of the fabulously old liquor, because he does not mention one point about such a drink. Some years ago, at the old Louisville Hotel, an old cask, from long before the Civil War, was found in the cellar. Two thirds or more had evaporated. Only a few drinks were sold to a single guest. I had mine and returned after a time disguised by a beaver. Well, sir, this stuff was thick as syrup, thicker even than Benedictine, but Downie is right about the delayed kick of a drink that was soft and sweet as an angel's kiss. I went over to the theatre, where I was advance-agenting a drama, and it took three quarters of an hour for the stealing effect to slowly seep up to what I fondly call my brain and hit me. Little stars were in my sky, and several moons . . . but that is only part of my memories. Only, I say, extremely old stuff like this, seldom to be found any-

(Continued on page 126)

ASK ADVENTURE

Information you can't get elsewhere

A short course in mining and metallurgy.

Request:—1) What are some of the least expensive ways of making or procuring an ore crusher? This is for small scale prospecting for a beginner.

2) Is prospecting allowed on Indian reservations? (gold)

3) What is the value of silver, platinum, copper, tin and tungsten?

4) (a) What are the ores associated with platinum?
(b) Was much platinum discovered in the United States?
(c) Is platinum deposited in placers?
(d) Is platinum heavier than gold?

5) Was much platinum found in Alaska?

6) If you were me, going on a prospecting trip for stones and minerals for the first time, alone, where would you choose to go: Alaska, a section of Canada, or a section of the United States?

7) (a) Is it easy to purchase mercury in peacetime?
(b) What is the value of mercury?
(c) Is mercury only extracted from cinnabar?

—Floyd T. Gorney
1637th Service Unit
U. S. Army Code School
Chicago, Illinois

Reply by Victor Shaw:—

Ques. 1—crusher for small scale work? OK, but wish I knew probable daily or weekly tonnage to gauge sizes. However, small jaw crushers very suited to your planned work could maybe use a jaw type (Blake) *sampling* outfit with jaw opening about 4 x 10 inches. Or, could maybe get a 2nd-hand one (rebuilt) at below cost of new machine. Morse Bros., Denver, Colo. always have a line of these stocked. Address 'em as given above.

Or, you might combine crushing and amalgamation, if your ore happens to be amenable; using an outfit put out by W. W. Gibson, 112 Market St., San Francisco, Calif., and I enclose their ad. in the E & M Journal. Any of these can be powered by water, if such is available; otherwise by gas engine, or (at *this* time and for cheap cost) by a Diesel engine. You'll have to get catalogues and write these folks, and figure for yourself. I had same problem in Alaska few years back, but water was plentiful. I got one 2nd-hand stamp and die outfit rigged to a wooden-bucketed waterwheel, to make the prospect pay its own way later for expanding.

Ques. 2—most States do permit such prospecting through a written permit from the Indian Bureau at Wash., D. C., but *lots* of red tape to unwind!

Ques. 3—silver price frozen at 71 some time ago—copper is 12c lb.—platinum frozen for some time at $36 an oz.—tin (99% pure) 52c lb.—tungsten: Chinese imported $17 a unit; domestic sheelite $24 a unit, the unit being 20 lbs. Note prices for silver—tin—platinum above are for the ingot and brick stuff refined at the mine; and the copper is for "electrolytic" Cu. The tungsten prices are for the ore themselves, that contain 1% metal or more.

Ques. 4—for this—reply needs explaining: platinum is mined in 2 ways, from placer deposits and also from veins containing this ore; but extremely little platinum is recovered from ore veins, as there are rather less than a dozen workable lodes of such ore on earth yet discovered. However, alluvial platinum found in placers and usually with gold, and some other valuable metals, supplies a large majority of platinum used in

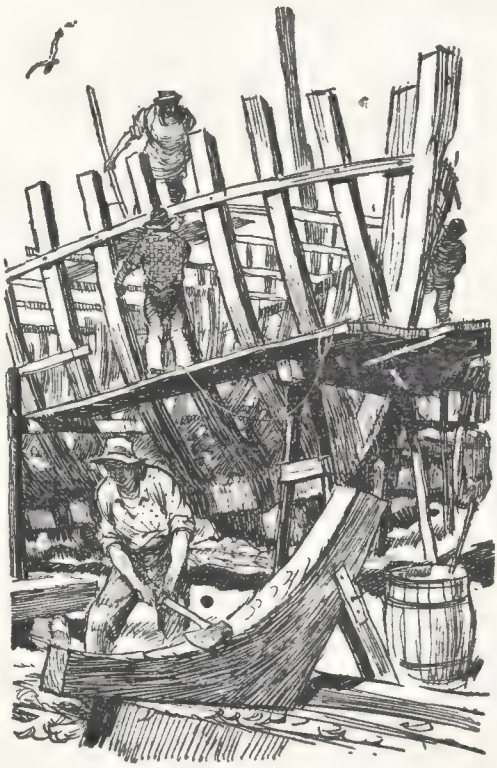
(Continued on page 128)

THE TRAIL AHEAD

THE road **Adventure** travels next month turns a new corner and becomes a three-lane highway of truly arterial proportions. The shoulders have been widened, grades and curves eliminated and we've paved the solid bed-rock foundation with the finest, quickest setting surface for fast exciting travel we could find. Toll charges on this new express thoroughfare have had to be increased slightly, of course, to absorb construction costs, but the added speed and mileage to the rider more than make up the difference, we believe. . . . All of which is just one way of telling you that we have finally been able to heed, with something more concrete than mere wishful thinking, the pleas of so many of you that we increase the size of your magazine "even if the price has to go up a little too." So beginning with the August issue you'll find a hundred and sixty pages instead of the hundred thirty you've had to be content with for a good many years. That means an additional thirty thousand words of copy, approximately, plus many more illustrations. The price of the magazine will be a quarter in the future. Now—to get back to the highway, take a look at the signposts and see just where the **Trail's** heading. . . .

"THE FLEET IN THE FOREST"

By Carl D. Lane



—opens the August issue. In the first of four stirring installments we meet Chid Alwyn, apprentice shipwright in the Tatum yard, whose personal code was "profits first and the devil take the country." Oliver Hazard Perry, recruiting men to help construct a fleet with which he may fight the British on Erie, almost wins Chid over, but instead of heading north he slips aboard the **Blessed Cause**, half privateer, half pirate, lured by the promise of quick and easy wealth. The gold he garners is far from easy money however, for the schooner proves a blood-ship as soon as the voyage begins and Alwyn—before he sights land again—is a wanted man with a charge of participating in murder and mutiny hanging over him.

The author, known for his authoritative books on ships and the sea, as well as for his gripping fiction, gives us, in this tale of the building of the fleet that saved this nation in another war, a tale as vitally contemporary in its interest and movement as though its period were today.

The illustrations for this distinguished new serial will be by Gordon Grant.

AND IN ADDITION

TWO COMPLETE NOVELETTES OF UNUSUAL INTEREST

set centuries apart in time—half a world away in their scene of action—each one a gripping yarn by a talented story-teller whose work has appeared in these pages before.

"TEMPORARY STARS"

By E. Hoffmann Price

and

"THE FORGE OF OLVIR BIGMOUTH"

By DeWitt Newbury

The first takes us to the Philippines where American-led guerrilla bands still surge forth from their jungle bases in the mountains of Moro-land to raid the Jap with kris and kampilan. Kane, Datu Ryan and Bishop Jackson—that fabulous trio born in "Last Boat from Zambeanga"—are all present to help pin the temporary stars of a general on Kane's shoulders as he leads his ragged commandos through the cogon grass. . . . And the second turns the clock back to the heyday of the Viking rovers when their long-boats cleaved the waves from the Skagerrak to Iceland, and every warrior's code had but one law—"It is better to die like a man than to live like a thrall."

On the short story roster HUGH WILEY, who hasn't been with us often enough lately, gives us "Steamboat Man," an amusing yarn of the Turkey Slough country in floodtime. . . . PIERSON RICKS, in "Caissons in the Sky," illustrates the military maxim—"There's always a back door to the enemy's camp"—with the amazing adventure of Sophocles McGwiggin and his message from Napoleon. . . . RAY MILLHOLLAND takes us to a foxhole on a South Pacific island to watch a couple of Leatherneck sharpshooters match "Shot for Shot" with a Nip sniper and settle the contest they'd begun on the Camp Perry range before they left home. . . . WILLIAM MARSHALL RUSH, WALTER ALDRICH TENNEY, PAUL EMILE MILLER and others join the ranks of our Writers' Brigade with fiction, facts and verse. . . . Plus the usual departments and features you've grown to look forward to each month only in—

160 Pages **Adventure** **25c**

The August issue will be out July 9th.

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Send each question *direct* to the expert in charge of the section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. **Do Not** send questions to the magazine. Be definite; explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question. The magazine does not assume any responsibility. **No Reply** will be made to requests for partners, financial backing or employment.

(Enclose addressed envelope with International Reply Coupon.)

Notice: Many of our *Ask Adventure* experts are now engaged in government service of one kind or another. Some are on active duty in the Army or Navy, others serving in an executive or advisory capacity on various of the boards and offices which have been set up to hasten the nation's war effort. Almost without exception these men have consented to remain on our staff, carry on their work for the magazine if humanly possible, but with the understanding that for the duration such work is of secondary importance to their official duties. This is as it should be, so when you don't receive answers to queries as promptly as you have in the past please be patient. And remember that foreign mails are slow and uncertain these days, many curtailed drastically. Bear with us and we'll continue to try to serve you as speedily as possible.

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462 Niagara St., Buffalo, N. Y.

(Continued from page 120)

where, save by such a chance, is (if anyone cares) thick, sweet and like heavy syrup, more so than any liqueur.

Anyway, the yarn was a grand one.

—John Wilstach,
Rhinebeck, N. Y.

And here's what the author of the yarn in question sends in reply—

I am shocked to hear from Mr. John Wilstach that my Gurgling Starlight, in the story, probably did not gurgle; but that very old liquor is apt to be thick and syrupy, a little like molasses. That's what comes of having to rely entirely upon hearsay for fiction material.

I am not partial to molasses either. When I was a kid I had to take it with sulphur every spring. I believe it was supposed to ward off measles, or the Evil Eye, or, perhaps, respiratory trouble. In addition to taking it internally I wore a bag of it on my chest under my shirt, like a locket. My parents set a lot of store by sulphur.

It made me feel like a match and, for days, I'd be afraid to put on my cap or comb my hair for fear I'd light. My mother thought this due to my natural glekitness and untidiness and my father said I looked more like a yak with every day that passed; but I knew I was a perambulating block-buster if nobody else did. And the same with my young sister, who had to line up and swallow that foul dose, share and share alike. Ordinarily I was apt to be a little rough with sister Anne, but, in sulphur-and-molasses season, when she was loaded with the stuff the same as I, I treated her with profound respect. One spring I got so polite and gentle with her that my parents decided I was coming down with something and doubled my dosage. That is, they doubled the sulphur. The molasses was already seeping out of my ears. And they used a larger spoon.

—J. Vale Downie.

It's too bad we're addicted only to the juice of the citrus fruit and consequently can't contribute anything definitive to the discussion.

KEITH EDGAR writes us from Toronto—

I am a Canadian and come from a long line of railroaders. My grandfather

was a railroad man, and my father, until his recent retirement, was the best damn hogger on his division, holding several spectacular speed records. With this blood in my veins, hope surged high in the Edgar family when young Keith started on the railroad too, some time back. Unfortunately, it soon became obvious that I was, by any and all standards the world's *worst* brakeman. In record time, I had committed every blunder in the book, and several very original ones thrown in gratis. Came the great depression, and sighs of relief were heard up and down the division when Keith Edgar was laid off. Drifted finally into commercial photography and was doing right well, thank you, when a bloke named Hitler started a chain of events which ruined the photography business—at least commercial work. Turned to writing some time ago because I was tired of working for a living. Was I disillusioned!!! "Heroes Are Made" is more than slightly autobiographical, as you may have gathered.

PERSONNEL NOTES: — Frank Winch of our *Ask Adventure* staff is busy at the 20th Century-Fox lot helping to supervise production of "Buffalo Bill," the new technicolor picture in process of being filmed from a story by Mr. Winch, who was a lifelong friend of Cody. The movie will concentrate on the circus career of Cody and will cost between a million and a million and a half dollars. . . . Dr. S. W. Frost, *A.A.* entomological expert, has a new book out, "General Entomology." McGraw-Hill are the publishers. . . . In an article called "The Legion Still Fights" by Col. Frank E. Evans, USMC in the April issue of *The Leathernecks*, official magazine of the Marine Corps, appears the following—"The French Foreign Legion has long been pictured on the screen and in fiction as a military unit recruited from the gutters of Europe, made up of men who sought its sanctuary one lap ahead of the local gendarmerie, or, as George Surdez so aptly named them, 'The Men who March from Yesterday'. . . . Percival Wren, in his unforgettable stories, has wronged the Legion by making no distinction between the Legionnaires and the notorious Battalion d'Afrique, units

(Continued on page 129)

ELECTRICITY

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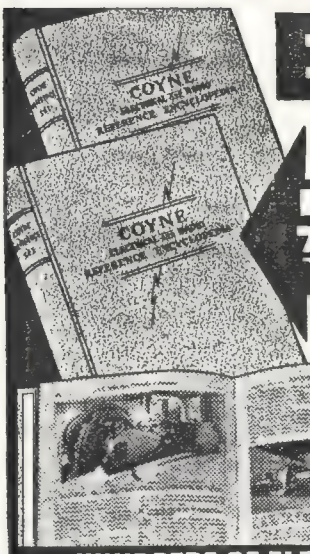

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ASK ADVENTURE

(Continued from page 121)

this country. Very big deposits in the Ural Mts., western Siberia, (some years ago) tended to upset the world price and did so to the extent that *I* well recall when it was $100 per ounce. An international cartel stabilized the price as it is now.

In lode (vein) form, platinum may occur with some type of a copper ore such as bornite (so found in the Salt Chuck mine, S. E. Alaska) and it may have much palladium with it, as well as other metals even gold and silver. IN PLACERS, it usually tho not always has pay-gold with it, also some other metals of the Platinum Group, including iridosmine which is an alloy of osmium and iridum (both of the platinum group) and worth last quotation I saw $100 an oz. Troy.

Ques. 4-B—quite a bit, tho only a small percentage of what we use and altho it is found in small amounts in many western States, most of it is derived from California placers in streams occurring in the big serpentine belt extending from Del Norte Co., through Siskiyou, Trinity, and running southwest of Shassa and north of Sacramento southeast to the Sierras.

Ques. 4-C—this is answered above, in re occurring in placer form.

Ques. 4-D—pure platinum is heavier than pure gold which has a specific gravity of 19.3, while that of platinum is 21.6. Iridium is 22.5, also.

Now as this is true, you can't separate gold and platinum in a goldpan by washing, in fact no way is known yet in field work and they are shipped together. The Alaska ore at Salt Chuck was shipped to New Jersey for treatment, there being no plant nearer that could handle it.

Ques. 5—yes, in the Goodnews Bay area not far southeast of Bethel at the mouth of the Kuskokwim River. So much has been coming out since 1937-8 that they had to curtail shipments so as not to disturb the world price. I have seen no recent data, but before P. H. it was around 30,000 ounces for 1939, a rise of 10,000 oz. over amount for 1938 of 20,000. There is some in other parts of Alaska but so far not in commercial quantities. This platinum at Goodnews Bay is all in placer form.

Ques. 6—where you go depends entirely upon what metal or mineral you are after. For example: altho platinum is found with gold in placers, it is rarely that you'll find any gold ore in veins occurring in the serpentine rocks in which platinum ores have always been found; the gold in such placers coming into the stream from belts of *other* rock formations in which gold ores do occur. Or, it could be vice versa, if the stream has crossed a serpentine belt in its course, to bring platinum into the placer below.

If you're after gold and in its placer form, it's no good nowadays in the States for shallow gravel rich enough to pay by hand work. And same is true for southern and much of central Canada, and also for much of Alaska along its coast—long prospecting has wiped them all out. So, I'd hit (in the north) for either interior Alaska, or Yukon Territory; or in some portion of Central America, in which Honduras offers good chances in its central and western regions. I know one place southwest of city of Juticalpa on any part of the Guavape River, which is a branch of the Panuco River flowing into the Caribbean Sea. The Guavape rises in mountains a little east of Tegucigalpa. Have to use a plane to get over jungles, and must pack in ALL supplies, but river gravels are very rich and haven't been much worked as yet. Nicaragua is rated richest State for gold, tho. If you want data on Guavape River placers write to Minstro de Fomento, Agricultura Y Trabajo, Tegucigalpa, Republica de Honduras, or to Consul for Honduras, San Francisco, Calif. I haven't his name but that'll get him.

Ques. 7—(a) yes, can buy practically all you want of mercury in peace time in any shop carrying chemical supplies, or mining supplies either. (b) Price of mercury now just under $200 per 76-lb. flask, or about $.250 a lb. in small amounts. (c) Cinnabar is the only commercial ore of mercury, altho it occurs in several other forms none of which are workable to furnish mercury in any quantity. If you need more help write again.

(Continued from page 127)

recruited solely from French criminals who could not serve with a French line regiment. Untruths about the Legion are many. The stories by George Surdez, however, are authentic and fair." (Thanks for them kind words, Colonel, even if you did misspell Surdez' first name.) "Sharper Than the Sword," Georges Surdez' new novelette, is scheduled to appear in these pages shortly, incidentally. . . . Victor Shaw, *Ask Adventure* expert on mining and prospecting, has leased his Colorado mine property and will be in charge of the Newhall Ranger Station, Newhall, Cal. through the summer and until they close the station down in December for the winter. . . . Dr. C. P. Fordyce of the *A.A.* staff is in charge of an emergency medical unit at the Missouri Methodist Hospital, St. Joseph, Mo. and instructing nurses in eye, ear, nose and throat. . . . . The February issue of *The Infantry Journal* carries an article by Lieutenant Colonel John V. Grombach, our *A.A.* boxing and fencing authority. "Kill or Get Killed" is the title of the piece which deals with personal combat—both armed and unarmed—and points out the flaws in the flood of get-tougher hand-books which have been appearing lately, most of which seem to stress the defensive rather than the offensive in hand-to-hand fighting. Colonel Grombach has in process of preparation a manual of his own which is to be published jointly by *The Infantry Journal* and Penguin Books. We'll keep you posted on publication dates—K. S. W.

The Trail Ahead on Page 122 contains some unusually exciting news of next month's "Adventure" — better take a look and see what it's all about!

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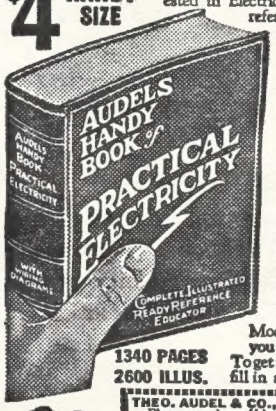

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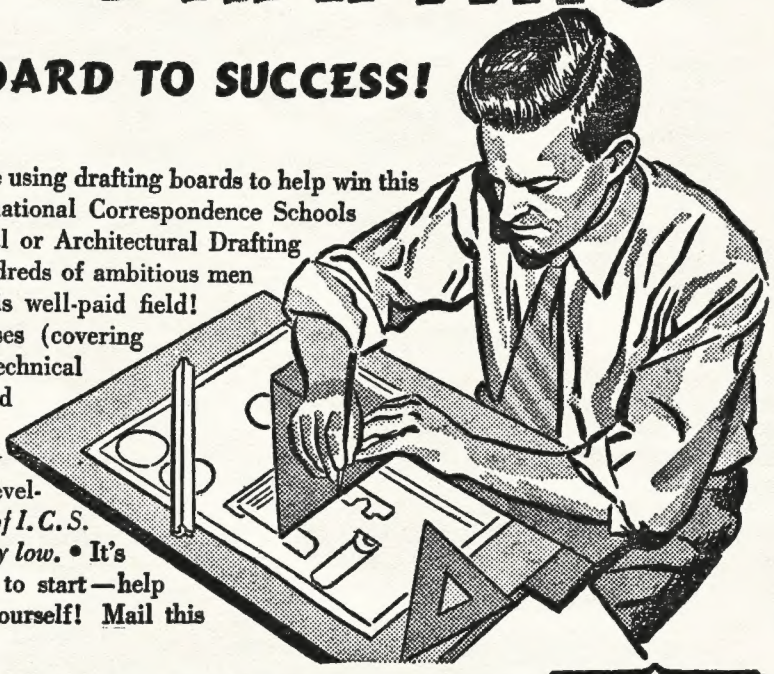

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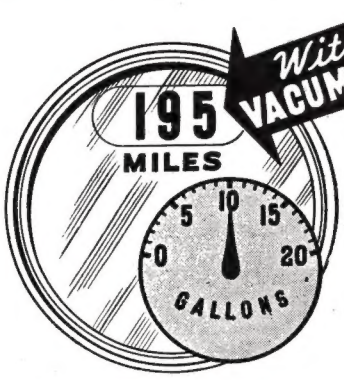

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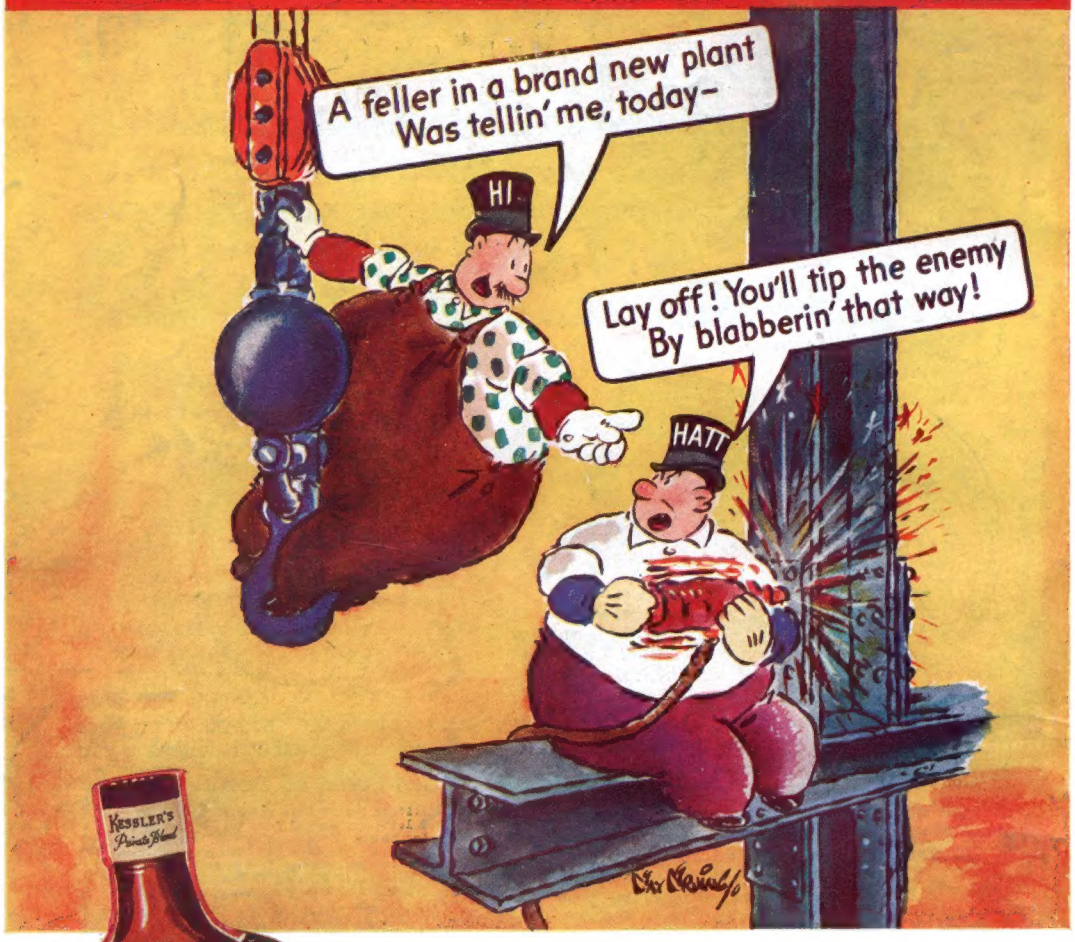

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